THE ICONOGRAPHY OF NEPALESE BUDDHISM



Min Bahadur Shakya

Published by
Handicraft Association of Nepal
In Co-operation with
ZDH/Technonet Asia
Partnership Programme
1994

Handicraft Association of Nepal
11/504 Maitighar, Thapathali
P. O. Box No: 784, Kathmandu, Nepal

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of

Nepalese Buddhism

BY

Min Bahadur Shakya

About the Author

Min Bahadur Shakya is a scholar of Newar and Tibetan Buddhism. Among his major publications are *A Short History of Buddhism in Nepal*, 1984. *Introduction to Buddhist Monasteries of Kathmandu Valley*, 1986.

He was elected Vice President of World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth WFBY for the years 1984–1988. His major research work on *Life and Contribution of Nepalese Princess Bhrikuti Devi* is shortly forthcoming. Mr. Shakya was nominated by Venerable Master Hsing Yun, Fokuang Shan, Taiwan as Research Associate in Fokuang Shan Chinese Buddhist Research Academy for the years 1989–1990.

In 1990, he was granted a SAARC Fellowship (Buddhist Studies) by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thimpu, Bhutan. Currently he is working as the Chief Editor of *Buddhist Himalaya*, a bi-annual journal dealing with Buddhism in the Himalayan regions. He has also contributed more a dozen research papers in reputed foreign journals. Since 1986, he is teaching in Engineering Institute, Pulchowk Campus, Lalitpur. Presently he is the Director, Nagarjuna Institute of Exact Methods.

Foreword

Under the definition of *Handicrafts* there are multiple products. Of them the statues of gods and goddesses of Buddhism and Hinduism stand foremost.Their importance is enhanced not only because of the fact that they are hand made but also that they are made by using meticulously time-consuming traditional tech-

niques: Lost Wax Process, Chiselling, antique finishing and so on. It has been long felt by craftsmen, dealers, collectors, and above all art connoisseurs that there was a dearth of books dealing with this subject and they all wished that there should be a book which must be authentic and reliable in subject matter and must have contained historical, cultural and religious meanings and artistic value.

The Handicraft Association of Nepal turned out to be an appropriate institution to ponder over this matter and initiated dialogue with ZDH/TA for publication of a book on this subject and partial sponsorship of fund which it accepted. The task of choosing an authentic/professional writer was found to be quite difficult. HAN then chose for this august work Mr. Min Bahadur Shakya who has been engaging himself in the study and research work of Buddhism and Buddhist Iconography for a long time.

I am glad and certain that his deep knowledge of iconography of the Buddhist as well as the Hindu pantheon will doubtlessly serve the purpose of the need of all concerned; including even those who do not fall in the above categories, but are simply general readers wishing to earn knowledge on Buddhist as well as Hindu icons. Also for scholars who come to visit this country time and again for their research work on Buddhism of the Greater Vehicle and its iconography this, this illustrious book will be a help. I express my heartfelt thanks to ZDH/TA and its Resident Representative, Mr. Harihar Subedi for their substantial financial support and valuable suggestions, without which the publication could not have materialized.

Yagya Ratna Dhakhwa

President Handicraft Association of Nepal.

Preface

A casual visitor will be surprised to see the large number of both peaceful and wrathful looking deities in Kathmandu valley. He will even be doubtful if these are Buddhist at all. Because in Theravada Buddhist tradition they are famliar with the image of Shakyamuni Buddha, Dharmacakra symbol, stupa, or some devas connected with Buddha legends. However, this is not the case in Kathmandu valley or in Nepal. The form of Buddhism is Vajrayana which traditional Buddhists believed to have been delivered by Shakyamuni Buddha himself. The Vajrayana form of Buddhism was fully developed in India at Nalanda and Vikramashila monasteries and it was fully dissiminated in Nepal and Tibet.

People in these countries have preserved its spiritual traditions through centuries and have produced a unique Buddhist culture and civilization through arts and paintings. These artistic paintings and sculptures are still scattered here and there in large number especially in Kathmandu valley. Apart from its artistic and historic value it has deep spiritual significance. In recent years, due to lack of proper understanding and importance of these images or sculptures many of them were stolen, vandalised or simply left neglected, to decay.

In order that people may get some understanding about the importance of these deities and appreciate its spiritual significance a humble attempt has been made to describe the merits and virtues of different deities in Nepalese context although brief in nature. If by going through these pages if some one feels inspired

and appreciated about the importance of these deities then, I believe the author is amply rewarded.

I am deeply indebted to Mr. Yagya Ratna Dhakhwa, President of HAN who gave me this opportunity for preparing this monograph. I owe an especial debts of thanks to my student Mr. Raj Tuladhar who prepared almost all of the line drawings of the deities used in this book. I would like to express my thanks to Mr. Pusparaj Shakya, Okubahal for providing photographs of his personal collection and to Mr. Rajesh Shakya, Mr Pradeepa Shakya and Mr. Ashoka Vajracharya who spared no pains in taking the necessary photographs .

To my cousin brother Mr. Chandra Bahadur Shakya, I am deeply grateful for his painstaking editing of my manuscript and for providing computer facilities. To my friends Mr. Milan Shakya and Mr. Madan Lal Shrestha I owe a debt of thanks for their artistic skills in layout and design of the cover and other illustrations.

Finally, to my sister Miss Samjhana Shakya I have my affection for she typed my entire manuscript into a computer.

Lastly, but not the least, to my friend Mr. Harihar Raj Joshi who gave a final touch to my manuscript, I appreciate his cooperation.

Min Bahadur Shakya
Chakupat, Lalitpur
March, 1994

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Amitabha Buddha (Swayambhu)

The Iconography of Nepalese Buddhism

I. Introduction

A. Buddhism and its Teachings

Lord Buddha appeared in this world with the sole purpose of benefitting all sentient beings of the Triple Realm. His appearance in this world is a very rare phenomena and is the outcome of the collective merits of his disciples and the beings who are to be trained under him. Out of great compassion Buddha Shakyamuni revealed many different means to attain enlightenment and to win liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Buddha Shakyamuni set forth Three Wheels of Law to suit varying degrees of intelligence and receptivity.

At a place called Mrigadavana (Deer Park) near Varanasi, Shakyamuni Buddha turned the First wheel of Law which constituted the doctrines of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path and it is designated as Shravakayana.

At a place called Gridha-kuta hill (Vulture Peak) near Rajgir, the Buddha turned the Second Wheel of Law which constituted the doctrines of Emptiness and Selflessness of the person and phenomena. These doctrines are vividly preserved in Prajnaparamita literature and Vaipulya sutras. This approach was later known as Mahayana or Path of the Bodhisattva.

At Vaisali, on the other hand, the Buddha turned the Third Wheel of Law which constituted the doctrines of Buddha-nature as described in Tathagatagarbhasutra, Mahaparinirvanasutra and Dharanisvararaja sutra.

At various places such as Dhanyakataka, Sriparvat, Kamakhya, Sirihatta, Purnagiri, Odiyana, etc. the Buddha revealed the path of Mantra to his highly gifted disciples as a shorter path to attain enlightenment. This approach was termed as Vajrayana which integrates all three vehicles.

A.1 Essence of Sutra Tradition

Refuge: We live in an ocean of samsara whose depth and extent cannot be measured. We are troubled again and again by afflictions of lust and hatred. To what refuge should we go then? In our childhood when we are in trouble we seek the refuge of our parents. But our parents are themselves suffering and are the victims of lust, hatred and delusion. They cannot be the source of refuge. A source of refuge must completely overcome all the defects forever i.e. it must be free of all faults. Only the Buddha has extinguished all faults and gained all the qualities and attainments.

Thus we take refuge in the Buddha. Since Dharma is the unmistaken path leading to enlightenment, we take refuge in Dharma which eliminates all our causes of suffering. We take refuge in Sangha who supports and guides our dharma practice. All Buddha images are representatives of the Buddha, Scriptures are the representatives of Dharma, Bhikshus and Bodhisattvas are the representatives of Sangha. Taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is termed as outer refuge.

The objects of inner refuge are Gurus, Istadevas and Dakinis. They will be described in a more elaborative way in subsequent chapters. And the secret refuge according to Vajrayana tradition is to realize Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya.

A.2 Karma & Its Effect

The main teachings of the Buddha constitute the Law of Cause and Effect. Although all the beings in samsara seek joy and shun sufferings they are ignorant of the cause of happiness or sorrow. In fact, the happiness and suffering of the sentient beings are the results of their own virtuous or non-virtuous actions.

Guru Suvarnadvipa of Indonesia once told Atisha Dipamkara, "Until you attain freedom from the delusion of ego-grasping, follow the Law of Cause and Effect."

With the purpose of creating fear in the minds of people from indulging in non-virtuous acts and understanding the essence of defilements, various wrathful images are being manifested by the enlightened beings specifically in Vajrayana tradition.

A.3 Tathagatagarbha (Buddha-nature)

All sentient beings possess Buddha-nature which means primordial wakefulness free from thought constructs present in

the mind. By virtue of possessing Buddha-nature, one is able to become an enlightened one. But in order to realize Buddha-nature, the precious human body is needed. The precious human body enables the accumulation of merits and wisdom which are needed for the realization of the enlightenment.

Because of this Buddha-nature of our mind an enormous pantheon of Vajrayana deities is being manifested in order to tame sentient beings and assist the practitioners in eliminating their obstructions to enlightenment. In Tantric Buddhist tradition we visualize Buddhas, Yidams, Dakinis and Bodhisattvas as enlightened states to be attained. The practice of deity yoga is compatible only because we have Buddha-nature.

A.4 Impermanence

The Buddha says that all composite things are impermanent. They are liable to disintegrate or are perishable in nature. The realization of impermanence is extremely important in all level of spiritual development including Bodhisattva levels. Instruction on impermanence is imperative as a remedy to eliminate attachment to sensuous experience of this life which is the essential condition for the attainment of Buddhahood.

In most of the Dharmapala imagery the bone ornaments are the symbols of the impermanent nature of phenomena. The wrathful appearances of Yidam or Dharmapala deities are also the embodiments of impermanence. When we realize the impermanent nature of our body and phenomena we are terri-

fied. Then slowly we understand that we all have to die, leaving behind everything except virtuous and nonvirtuous deeds done in our life time.

A.5 Suffering of Samsara

The Buddha's main concern in teaching the Four Noble Truths is relinquishing of sufferings of the samsara. The entire Sutra literature and its commentaries deal with suffering of samsara and ways or means to eliminate the sufferings. The practice of Four Noble Truths enables one to the path of liberation. Upon realizing the vicious state of samsara, one turns one's own mind away from pleasure of this world and thus approaches liberation, relinquishing all the causes of suffering(as in the Theravada tradition).

In the Mahayana tradition, the practitioners (Bodhisattvas) although undergoing all the sensual experiences of the world, do not do so for themselves but for the sake of others. And through such activities they accumulate merits and wisdom and attain buddhahood in the future.

Similarly in the Vajrayana tradition, such motives as described above are being depicted in various forms of imagery.

A.6 Bodhicitta

The foundation of Mahayana tradition lies in the practice of Bodhicitta. The text Abhisamayalamkara states:

> "The formation of an enlightened attitude (Bodhicitta) is the desire for enlightenment for the benefit of others".

For the attainment of enlightenment, Bodhicitta is essential at all bodhisattva levels. There is no Buddha or Bodhisattva who lacked it. So all the Highest Yoga Tantra deities who are depicted in sexual union with their consorts are, however, the embodiment of the union of Bodhicitta (male) and wisdom (female). It is said that enlightenment is impossible without these two aspects.

A.7 Essence of Vajrayana Tradition

The secret Mantrayana is hidden (skt. *Guhya*) because it is not appropriate for the common people. It is however, fit for the advanced practitioner well versed in Emptiness, Bodhicitta and Renunciation. There are two factors in the Mantra vehicle:

a) Pride in oneself as the deity
b) Vivid appearance of that deity

Divine pride protects one from ordinary appearance and through this change in attitude the pride of being a deity emerges. Forms are viewed as the emanation of the deity and the deity itself is the product of the mind and sounds as the mantras of that deity.

In order to embark on this practice of Vajrayana one should have the initiation or empowerment of a particular deity from a qualified Guru. By this empowerment the disciple will learn the exact nature and classification of the tantric system into which he is to be introduced. He will also know the nature of mandala and pre-requisites for the disciple and the stage of the empowerment to be followed. It is desirable for the artists and sculptors to have at least one initiation of Highest Yoga Tantra under a qualified Guru and learn fundamental tenets of Mahayana and Vajrayana practices.

A.8 Sacred Pledge (skt. *Samaya*)

Keeping vows, receiving the Initiation and the sacred word of honour are the foundation for the meditation on two stages of the tantric path. When one has received an abhiseka one should not forsake the complete set of 18 bodhisattva and 14 tantric vows. Breaking any of the root tantric vows would cause one to lose the effective power of the Initiation.

A.9 Developing & Completion Stage

In order to have the attainment of Buddhahood one must practice developing the first stage and only then should go on to practice completion stage. Through practising 'developing stage' only, one may necessarily acquire the five fold miraculous power, yet, the practice of the 'developing stage' is

the integral part of the path for attaining the highest goal i.e. Buddhahood. Generally 'developing stage' is the visualization of the meditational deity and his circle of mandala visualized clearly and simultaneously in all details. Here the artists must be careful in creating the images of various deities with due attention, following the cannonical texts or the instructions of a qualified tantric Buddhist master.

In profound 'completion stage' is the practice of meditation on emptiness on the nature of these deities. So proper care must be taken into consideration to produce images of a genuine nature so that it becomes the object of faith and devotion.

B. Leading Tenets

B.1 Trikaya Doctrine

B.1.1 Dharmakaya

According to Mahayana Buddhist tradition, an enlightened being is said to possess two bodies: Truth Body and Form Body. It is said that through the practice of six perfections one accumulates merits and wisdom through which one realizes Dharmakaya as the result.

Dharmakaya is the stage of the mind free from dual obscuration i.e. obscuration to liberation and omniscience. The obscuration to liberation i.e. afflictive emotions (skt. ***Kleshavarana***) pertains to the attitude of self grasping (skt. ***atmagraha***

drsti) and resulting defilement. Whereas obstruction to omniscience pertains to all preconceived ideas about the reality (skt. *Jneyavarana*). When one is free from all these constructive thought patterns, one spontaneously experiences the Dharmata of all knowable things. The knowledge of experiences of Dharmata of all phenomena is termed as Dharmakaya.

This stage of experience is called by different names such as Tathata, Emptiness and Yathabhuta. The Buddha says that one who sees this Dharmakaya sees the Buddha. The attainment of Buddhahood is just the realization of this Dharmakaya. According to Vajrayana tradition, this wisdom of Dharmakaya is classified into five wisdoms i.e. all pervasive wisdom, mirror-like wisdom, wisdom of equality, discriminative wisdom and all-accomplishing wisdom. This five forms of wisdom is represented by five transcendental Buddhas called Vairocana, Akshobhya, Ratna Sambhava, Amitabha and Amogha Siddhi. These five Buddhas are the source of vast pantheon of Vajrayana Buddhism. So all the deities both male and female are associated with these five Buddhas as their source of origin.

Dharmakaya, on the other hand, is said to be that stage when one purifies death, intermediate state and rebirth. When a practitioner dies they experiences the dissolution of four elements one after another. Their sense faculties do not function and only their consciousness supported by vital air become apparent and they experience Clear light of Death. If the deceased can experience and recognize this Clear light it is the same as realizing Dharmakaya. Most of the Mahasiddhas who could

not realize Dharmakaya in their life time, can realize it after death. It is said that in this stage of mind if one realizes clear knowing aspect and the empty nature of the mind it is called Dharmakaya. This two in one nature of mind is primordially present in every sentient being. Our own consciousness is in reality empty and cognizant, blissful and shining. The unity of them is the Dharmakaya state of Perfect Enlightenment.

B.1.2 Sambhogakaya

When one realizes Dharmakaya he is endowed with the wisdom of knowing nature as it is (skt. ***Yathabhuta***) and with the wisdom of all existing objects of knowledge. Owing to the removal of all the veils and obstructions covering the mind his omniscient mind gives rise to twofold body i.e. Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya.

There are four characteristic features of Sambhogakaya Buddha. Firstly, he is always endowed with 32 major marks and 80 minor marks. Secondly, he always teaches Mahayana among the families of irreversible bodhisattvas. Thirdly, he resides in one specific buddha field. Fourthly, he perfectly enjoys that Buddha realm with great peace and happiness.

Sambhogakaya means 'perfect enjoyment body'. The bodhisattva since the beginning of his career has taken vows of relieving suffering of all sentient being and giving them peace and happiness. So he guides suffering beings to Bodhisattva level. The enjoyment body of Buddha then converts beginner bodhisattvas to perfect Enlightenment through guidance.

Hence, Sambhogakaya is very pure and perceptible only to realized Bodhisattvas. Enjoyment here means the fulfillment of his vows and aspirations of the Buddha. In Sambhogakaya there is no limit of capacity or ability of his body, speech and mind. Whatever he wishes or aspires for the qualities of the Buddha, he will get the fruit as he desires when he attains Buddhahood. For example Bhikshu Dharmakar, when he was a bodhisattva, made 48 vows and aspirations in order to relieve the suffering and to get himself established into Buddhahood. Later on according to his vows and aspirations, Bhikshu Dharmakar became Buddha Amitabha in Sukhavati heaven.

According to Tantric Buddhist tradition, all Buddhas like Vajradhara, Vajrasattva and Yidam deities appear in the form of Sambhogakaya. They have all sorts of ornaments and garments signifying the qualities of enlightenment. The multi-arm, multi-face and multi-emblems they hold are the embodiments of the qualities of enlightenment.

Sambhogakaya has eight qualities of mastery.

1. He is endowed with the mastery of body which can take any shape or form to tame sentient beings according to their need.
2. He is endowed with mastery of speech which has 64 qualities and can turn the wheel of dharma for sentient beings as needed.

3. He is endowed with mastery of mind which possesses non-conceptual compassion.
4. He is endowed with unimpeded miraculous powers.
5. He is endowed with mastery of desire being unstained even when presented with sensual pleasures of all kinds.
6. He is like a wish-fulfilling gem fulfilling the desires and hopes of beings.
7. He resides in the pure abode of Akanistha continuously as the dharma king over three realms.
8. He is endowed with realization of one taste between Nirvana and Samsara signifying his mastery of all pervasiveness.

Hence all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas of high rank, Istadevatas i.e. Yidam Herukas are depicted in their Sambhogakaya aspects. Their specific color, emblems, faces are the metaphorical ways of expressing the qualities of enlightenment. For example 16-armed Mahakala represents the deity indicating 16 types of emptiness he represents. Four-armed Mahakala represents his dominion over four Maras, the (four obstructions on the path of Enlightenment). Yamantaka, who kills the Lord of death, represents the deathlessness aspect of perfect enlightenment.

In another context Sambhogakaya is also said to be an illusory body which a dying sentient being experiences in the intermediate state after death. He will see various peaceful and wrathful deities which are the emanations of his own thought

forms. In Tantric Buddhist tradition this mental body in the intermediate state is utilized for realization of illusory body and then Mahamudra.

B.1.3 Nirmanakaya

We have already said that an enlightened being has two bodies: Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya. Sambhogakaya Buddha usually resides only in a pure Buddha field. Nirmanakaya Buddha assumes innumerable forms or transform bodies according to the circumstances and attitudes of the sentient being to be converted or tamed. It is said in Prajna Sutra that one who practises the perfection of wisdom attains the supreme enlightenment and emanates many transformed bodies to suit the varying degrees of intelligence in ten different direction to convert the stubborn beings in the path of the dharma. This emanation body is of many kinds.

One such Nirmanakaya is called Supreme Nirmanakaya. The supreme Nirmanakaya is the body of Buddha having 32 marks and 80 minor marks. He is born as a human being and performs 12 principal deeds of the Buddha such as birth, display of skill in arts, marriage, renunciation, austerities, attainment of the Buddhahood, turning the wheel of dharma and his final passing away, etc. During the Buddha's historic career innumerable beings were liberated through his skill in means of 12 principal deeds. The Buddha like Dipamkara, seven Buddhas, etc. are supreme Nirmanakaya.

Another form of Nirmanakaya is a Tulku like the Dalai Lama who takes rebirth for specific number of times to convert the beings in the path of enlightenment.

Most of Gurus and Mahasiddhas belong to this category. Yet another form of Nirmanakaya is Created Nirmanakya. The Buddha once created a beautiful celestial lady in order to tame a haughty and proud queen named Khema, the consort of king Bimbisara. Queen Khema found the lady much more charming than herself. Suddenly she saw that the lady collapsed and died. The queen then realized the impermanent nature of our human body and beauty. Later on she became the foremost lady disciple of the Buddha.

For Nirmanakaya, the emanated body, it is not necessary to be a human body only but it can be in animal forms such as monkey, elephant, bird, etc. also.

B.2 Gurus

In Vajrayana Buddhism, Gurus are of paramount importance. In fact, it is due to Gurus starting from the time of the Buddha Shakyamuni right upto present time, that the entire lineages of dharma teachings are being preserved and practiced. In the Theravada tradition Shakyamuni Buddha is also called Shasta i.e. the Guru of all devas and men. But in the Vajrayana tradition, Gurus like Padmasambhava, Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, Milarepa, Tsong Khapa, Virupa and many others are also considered to be the representives of the enlightenment which

Buddha Shakyamuni realized. Later on in the Vajrayana tradition also, the images of the Gurus were used to visualize to actualize the mind of Buddha.

Some Gurus are also considered to be the emanated bodies i.e. reincarnated Nirmanakaya of some Buddhas and Bodhisattvas like Amitabha, Manjusree or Avalokiteshvara.

B.3 Buddhas

In Vajrayana tradition all the Buddhas are called Gurus. However especially five transcendental Buddhas (skt. ***Pancabuddha***) who represent the essence of five primordial defilements such as lust, hatred, delusion, pride and jealousy are mainly dealt with here. When one realizes the essence of these five delusions one achieves 'five wisdom'. The essence of lust is symbolized by Buddha Amitabha and is known as discriminating wisdom. The essence of delusion (skt. ***moha***) is symbolized by Buddha Vairocana and is known as all pervasive wisdom. The essence of anger is symbolized by Buddha Akshobhya and is called Mirror-like wisdom. The essence of pride is symbolized by Buddha Ratna Sambhava and is known as Wisdom of Equality. The essence of jealousy is symbolized by Buddha Amoghsiddhi and is known as all accomplishing wisdom. Thus primordial purity of these five defilements which obscure our mind is represented by Pancabuddha.

These five Buddhas are not the subdivision of Buddha Shakyamuni nor do they have consorts and children of their own as some Buddhist scholars understand. These forms of Pancabuddha are in fact the metaphorical ways of expression of non-dual wisdom and skill in means. As previously mentioned they are Sambhogakaya Buddhas and can perform ceaseless activity for the benefit of all sentient beings.

B.4 Bodhisattvas

In the Mahayana Buddhist tradition Bodhisattvas are said to be of two kinds. One is Adi-karmika Bodhisattva who is a beginner, who has not realized perfect enlightenment and is still a learner. Firstly he or she develops enlightenment thought for the benefit of sentient beings and wishes for perfect enlightenment. Secondly there is a Bodhisattva who realizes emptiness face to face and attains the first Bodhisattva level. He gradually progresses till the tenth Bodhisattva level through the practice of the six perfections and Mahamudra.

Some of them even after attaining the level of Buddhahood, emanate forms and act like Bodhisattvas. As, for example, Buddhas like Avalokiteshvara, Manjusree, Vajrapani and some other high ranking Bodhisattvas emanate numerous forms to tame the sentient beings in the manner of beginner Bodhisattvas. Shakyamuni Buddha himself took three incalculable aeons to complete his career as a Bodhisattva. Those

who have attained the first level up to the tenth level of Bodhisattva have enormous power to benefit others.

Eight high ranking bodhisattvas who are no less than Shakyamuni Buddha himself in wisdom, compassion and powers, will be dealt with in the subsequent chapters. It is to be noted that Bodhisattvas can be a male or a female. All female divinities of genre Tara and protrectress deities are Bodhisattvas who work for the benefit of sentient beings as male counterparts do.

B.5 Istadevata (Yidam deities)

In the Vajrayana Buddhist tradition Istadevata (Yidam) are called mind bound deities. Because the nature of these deities is the same as the nature of mind. The practitioners in Vajrayana Buddhism visualize Istadevatas such as Hevajra, Cakrasamvara, Kalacakra and others during developing stages of meditation (skt. ***Utpattikrama***) as their Samatha and Vipasyana practice. They are originated from their seed syllables which appear from a non-dual state of mind, free of thought constructs or state of emptiness. They are not mere imaginations. They are the visualized forms of enlightened minds. They are all Sambhogakaya Buddha forms emanated from a true mind. These deities have however, no real existence as such. But they are the emanated forms of enlightened mind.

Practitioners who have an affinity to these deities in one form or the other can develop their realization very quickly

with these practices since these deities represent emotional inclination of the practitioners. If some practitioners like to have Avalokiteshvara, the other may opt for Arya Tara. Some practitioners of aggressive nature rather prefer wrathful deities to meditate or to identified with. In all the Tantric Buddhist tradition these deities are visualized clearly with different colors, forms, faces, hands, all with different ornaments.

The purpose of this deity yoga is to take the form of the deity and actualize his Buddha activities during meditation. This creative visualization method is used to achieve a form body endowed with 32 major marks and 80 minor marks i.e. Sambhogakaya. It is said that the fruit of Buddhahood must be achieved through a method which has the form of the Buddha.

One of the characteristic features of the Yidam deity is the sexual imagery found in Highest yoga tantra (Anuttara tantra). Upon confrontation with father-mother union (Yab-yum) aspect of the Buddha, a casual observer may find it difficult and astonishing to understand the fearsome and erotic nature of the images in the context of Vajrayana Buddhism.

In Nepal this Tantric knowledge is said to be guarded by Nepalese Vajracharyas and in Tibet, by Tibetan Gurus. These Highest Yoga tantra deities are kept strictly secret and are to be seen by the initiated only. However such deities, which were kept secret in past, are now finding their way into the open for different reasons and consequently, the meanings or

implication relating to these deities have been the subject of growing curiosity.

It is true that Vajrayana is the vehicle of 'skill in means' which utilizes even desire or lust to attain Buddhahood. Vajrayana being the path of transformation utilizes even sexual bliss to realize emptiness or nature of mind.

It is said that these practices of Highest Yoga tantra deities involving sexual imagery are appropriate for the most gifted practitioners only. Through such creative visualization process they develop experiences of emptiness of the highest standard, that is, Buddha-nature.

The examples of such tantras are Guhyasamaja, Hevajra, Kalacakra, etc. The Highest Yoga tantra claims that Buddhahood is possible within a single life time. Eighty-four mahasiddhas of India, Nepal and Tibet attained enlightenment in their own life time through the practice of such tantras.

B.6 Dakinis

In Tantric Buddhist tradition the practitioner takes refuge in the Triple Gem which is referred to as the outer refuge. The objects of the inner refuge are said to be Gurus, Istadevas and Dakinis. Dakinis are obviously representatives of Sangha in the inner refuge. They are peaceful as well as wrathful. They wear bone ornaments. Some are in dancing posture. Some are even nude.

These Dakinis generally travel through empty space hence also called Sky-goers. They help the practitioners by eliminating different obstacles and by guiding to realization of the path to enlightenment. They are able to grant eight great powers (skt. ***Astasiddhi***) to all devoted practitioners. Some Dakinis are animal faced like Simhavaktra (lion-faced), Vajravarahi (sow-faced), Sardulamukha (tiger-faced) and many others. Vajrayogini is said to be Sarva-Buddha Dakini who confers Buddhahood to the practitioners. These Buddha Dakinis are said to be the representatives of Wisdom or Prajna-paramita.

B.7 Dharmapalas (Protectors of Doctrine)

As the name suggests Dharmapalas are the divinities who help to protect the Buddha dharma from degeneration and they also act as defenders of the Buddha's doctrines. They are in general wrathful in appearance to terrify the sinners. In Nepal, Mahakala is considered to be the great wrathful Dharmapala whose image is installed inmost of the Buddhist viharas and temples.

Actually, all divinities of direction starting from Yamantaka are Dharmapalas. These protector deities are also called Lord of Knowledge (skt. ***Vidyadhara***) indicating their status of high Bodhisattva level.

B.8 Dikpalas (The Deities of Direction)

Dikpalas or Lokapalas are the deities who correspond to the deities found in Hindu tantric tradition. All the eight mother goddesses starting from Camunda, Brahmayani, Kaumari, Indrayani, Varahi, etc. are considered as protectress of the dharma in Buddhist tradition, whereas in the Hindu tradition they are ultimate principle to be actualized.

In the Buddhist tradition the deities of direction include deities like Yama, Varuna, Indra, Vayu, Agni and others who have taken the oath to protect the practitioners and sasana of the Buddha's doctrines. In Gunakarandavyuha Sutra it is even said that Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara emanated these Lokapalas to defend the Buddha sasana.

Vajrayana Buddhism incorporates almost all the Hindu deities as protectors of the dharma to eliminate obstacles on the path to enlightenment. The involvement of Hindu deities is not only limited to Vajrayana tradition but also in Theravada tradition in Sri Lanka where they use Indra, the king of devas as protector of dharma.

C. Conclusion

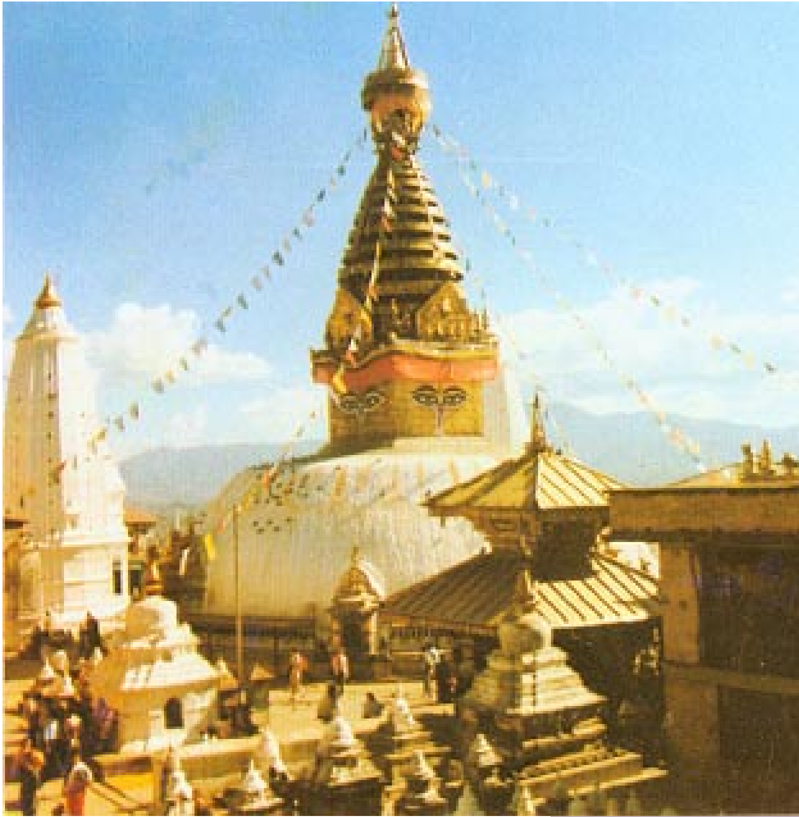
Nepal has a time honoured tradition of art and culture embedded with Buddhism. In fact, the artistic tradition of Nepalese people is instrumental in elevating the status of Nepal in the world. In the past Nepalese artists produced many excellent

images and were sent to Tibet, China, Japan and Mongolia. The bronze statue of Buddha Akshobhya Vajra (in Lhasa at Ramoche temple) is considered to be one of the most excellent images ever produced by the artists of Nepal, which was taken to Lhasa by Nepalese princess Bhrikuti Devi in the seventh century.

Although the artistic heritage has come a long way through the lives and lifestyle of Nepalese people, the exact meanings and implications as regard to the different images or deities relating to Vajrayana Buddhism has slowly gone out of focus during the passage of time. Even today there are many sculptors, artists and painters who can meticulously carve or paint such images or deities with excellent results, but the incumbent meanings however cannot be found with ease.

The purpose of this monograph is to provide some facts, materials and information on Buddhist Iconography gathered through extensive study of canonical texts relating to Vajrayana Buddhism prevailing in Nepal and some from Tibet albeit in a humble way. The readers are specifically sculptors, artists, painters and students of Buddhism interested in Buddhist Iconography and general public people. The monograph describes important deities and images specially relevant in Nepalese context along with their functions, utility, virtues and wisdom in the path to enlightenment.





‹ *Swayambhu Stupa*



Vajradhara (silver) ›

II. Dharmakaya Representation

2.1. Swayambhu

Nepal was the place where the system of Adi-buddha was originated. The Swayambhu Purana gives an account of the first manifestation of Adi-Buddha or primordial Buddha in the form of a flame of fire or Clear Light (skt. *Prabhashvara*). The meaning of Clear Light is self-cognizant and unfabricated original wakefulness primordially present in the mind stream of all sentient beings of the three realms. Since it is primordially present in all sentient beings it is called Buddha-nature or Tathagatagarbha or Adi-Buddha. The nature of Clear Light which is Dharmakaya is not generally represented in images or sculptures. For Dharmakaya is not the form body. Dharmakaya aspect is depicted in a stupa or in a Caitya form only. However in Tibetan Nyingmapa tradition, Dharmakaya aspect is depicted in painting as Adi-Buddha Samantabhadra/ Samantabhadri form.

Samantabhadra is blue in color. symbolizing emptiness essence of our mind and Samantabhadri is white in color symbolizing clear knowing aspect of the mind. The unity of emptiness and cognizant aspect is thus depicted in male and female form of Adi-Buddha. Adi-Buddha does not mean first Buddha or creator of the Universe. Samantabhadri is totally nude and without even ornaments symbolizing Dharmakaya or the nature of the mind which is free of thought constructs

or fabrication. It means that Dharmakaya can be realized only when we are free from thought constructs and perceive the emptiness nature of our mind directly.



Adi-Buddha Samantabhadra/Samantabhadri

III. Sambhogakaya Representation

3.1 Vajradhara

Shakyamuni Buddha appeared in this world with the sole purpose of benefitting all sentient beings. Out of great compassion Lord Buddha revealed many different means/paths to enlightenment and set forth three Wheels of Law to suit varying degrees of intelligence and receptivities.

Shakyamuni Buddha himself was, it is said, in the form of Vajradhara while he was teaching tantric path to his gifted disciples. Vajradhara is depicted holding a Vajra and a bell in his left hand and his arms are kept crossed in front of him expressing complete integration of Prajna and Upaya. He is usually depicted in blue colour in vajraparyanka posture. He has a crown, an Urna and an Ushnisha as a Sambhogakaya Buddha.

Vajradhara is also depicted in father-mother (Aaju-Aji in Newari) aspect. Then he holds his usual symbols while his arms are crossed at the back of his consort. The consort is none other than Prajnaparamita in deified form.

The Kargyudpa lineage of Tibetan Buddhism begins with the Buddha Vajradhara. The individual in this tradition is allowed to visualize his root Guru as Buddha Vajradhara. Guru Tilopa is said to have received Mahamudra instruction directly from Buddha Vajradhara through visions and other extraordinary means.

In Nispannayogavali, Vajradhara is the main deity in Vajrasattvamandala. He is three faced, six-armed and reddish white in color. His right arm holds a vajra, a sword and a kapala and his left hand holds a bell, an ankush and a noose. He stands in the Ardhaparyanka posture and dances in Tandava style.

3.2 Vajrasattva

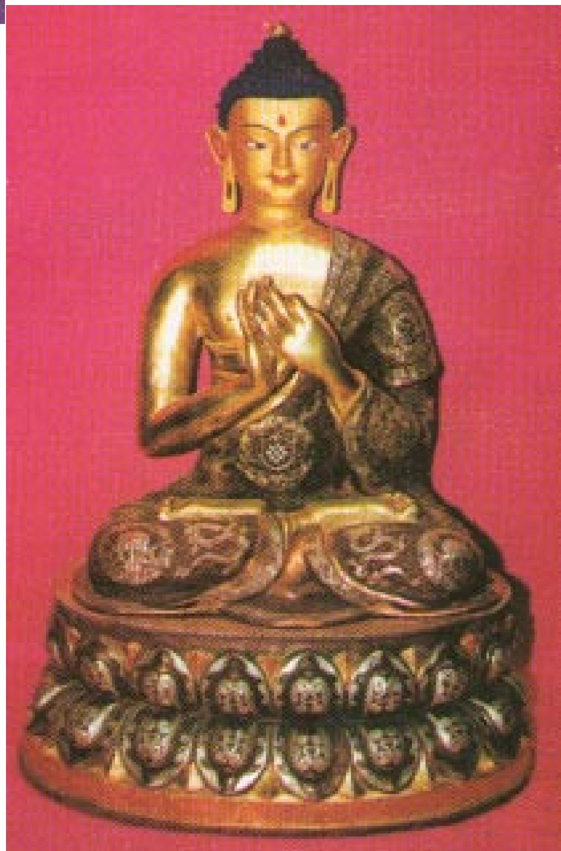
Vajrasattva is also regarded as Adi-Buddha by Nepalese Vajracharyas who follow Vajrayana tradition according to the text Vajrasattvakaya. His body is white with one face and two hands. His right hand holds a five pronged golden vajra at his heart. His left hand holds a silver bell at his side. He sits in the Vajraparyanka posture wearing precious silks and ornaments with jewel diadem. His body is adorned with 32 major and 80 minor marks of a Sambhogakaya and emits a clear limitless light. It appears to lack all notion of substantiality, like the reflection of moon in water.

Vajrasattva has father-mother aspect too. Generally this form is not exhibited in open. It is shown only to those who are initiated in Highest Yoga Tantra. His form is the same as in the single one but his consort carries a kartri in her right hand and a kapala in her left hand.

Vajrasattva is said to have been originated from seed syllable *Hum* and is generally invoked for removal of obscuration of Kleshavarana and Jneyavarana. His hundred syllable man-



‹ *Vajrasattva*
(silver)



Buddha
Vairocana ›
(bronze)

tra is very efficacious in purifying our defilements through confession practice. It is said if confession is done with the four opponent powers, then non-virtuous actions or obscurations will be purified. The first opponent power is the force of reliance. This means looking upon the visualized image of Vajrasattva as the embodiment of one's refuge. The second opponent power is the sincere regret for the non-virtuous action done by oneself. The third opponent power is desisting from evil deeds. The fourth opponent power is to apply power of good deeds; and specially regarding this case, practicing the meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva without parting from Bodhicitta while remaining in the state of emptiness. Vajrasattva is a very popular tutelary deity for Nepalese Vajracaryas. He is worshipped very often by Nepalese Buddhists through Gurumandala ritual.

3.3 Vairocana Buddha

He is one of the five Tathagatas symbolizing all pervasive wisdom (skt. *Suvisuddha dharma dhatu jnana*) i.e. knowledge free from all kinds of obscuration. He is placed generally in the sanctum of the stupa. Sometimes he is placed between Akshobhya and Ratna Sambhava in the stupa. He resides always in the Akanistha heaven.

He is white in color and his hands are held against his chest with the tips of thumb and forefinger of each hand

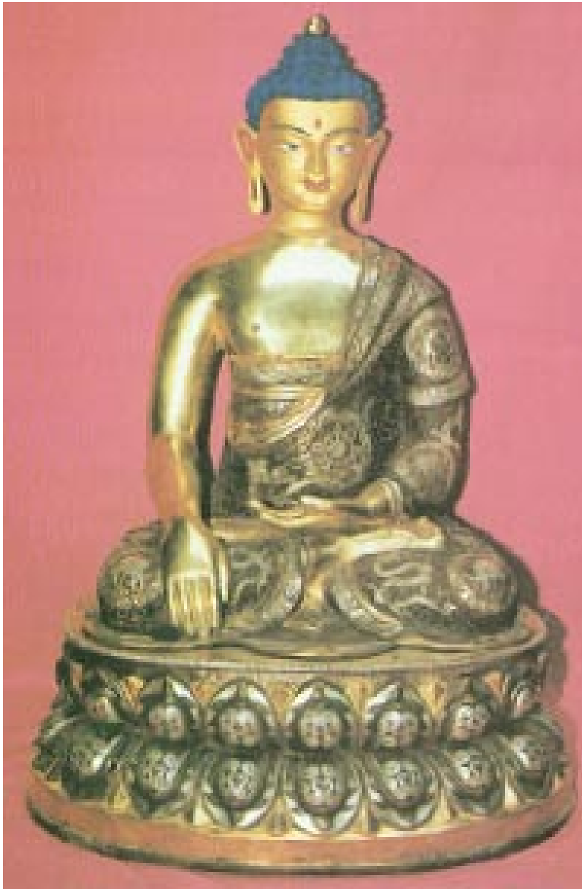
joined displaying Bodhyanga mudra. His vehicle is a pair of lions symbolizing lions roar of dharmadhatujnana which terrifies all wrong views. He can be recognized through white disc or dharmacakra which cuts all wrong views.

Vairocana Buddha originates from the seed syllable ***Om*** placed on the orb of the moon. He also represents Rupa (form) of five aggregates. He is not a historical Buddha like Shakyamuni Buddha. According to Dharmalakshana sect of Mahayana Buddhism he is considered to be Svabhavika-kaya of Shakyamuni Buddha. In some esoteric sect of Japan he is said to be the supreme lord of secret vehicle i.e. Mahavairocana.

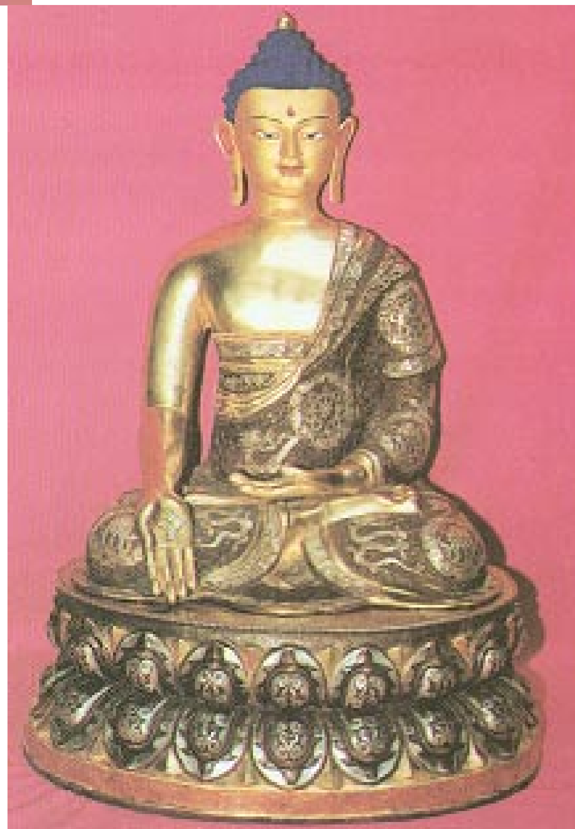
When Vairocana Buddha is four faced and eight-armed he is addressed as Vajradhatu Buddha. According to Vajradhatumandala of Nispannayogavali, Vairocana is seated in Vajraparyanka and is white in color. His four faces are of white, yellow, red, and green color. He is eight-armed with his two hands holding a vajra and displaying dharmacakra mudra; the second pair shows dhyana mudra, third pair holds a rosary and an arrow and the last pair holds a discus and a bow.

3.4 Akshobhya Buddha

He is also one of the five Tathagatas symbolizing Mirror like Wisdom (skt. *Adarsa jnana*) which means the wisdom like space, all pervasive, without periphery and without characteristics. He is the essence of purified form of Hatred. As in a



Buddha
‹ *Akshobhya*
(bronze)



Buddha
Ratna
Sambhava ›
(bronze)

mirror every visible object reflects so the knowledge of dharmakaya reflects in our mind. The image of Akshobhya Buddha is generally placed in the East in the stupa.

He is blue in color. He exhibits Earth-touching gesture (skt. ***bhumisparsa mudra***). He rides on the throne of an elephant symbolizing steadfast nature of his bodhisattva vows. In the past when he was a bodhisattva he made these strong vows in front of Buddha Mahacakshu.

a) I now engender supreme bodhicitta. If I bear malice against sentient beings from now until my attainment of supreme enlightenment I will be disobeying all the Buddhas.
b) Now I have resolved to pursue All Knowing Wisdom and firmly dedicated to this goal. If I generate any doubt, intention to kill or steal, any wrong view or impure deed or if I am prone to lying, duplicity or harsh language or if I hurt other in other ways from now on until my attainment of supreme enlightenment, I will be deceiving Buddhas.

When he thus first brought forth bodhicitta, this bodhisattva-mahasattva was clad with the armour of vigor, and was never moved by hatred or the like toward any sentient being. Since then, because of his thought, the Bodhisattva was called Akshobhya the immovable of the land of Abhirati.

In other words, Akshobhya attained Buddhahood under the tree of seven jewels in the land of Abhirati i.e. wonderful joy in the east. Because of the power of his vows, there are no

lower realms in his Buddha land. Every sentient being in his Buddha land does virtuous deeds and restrains from angry behaviours. According to the Ratnakuta Sutra, if one determines to practice the bodhisattva way of life, as he vows he will be reborn in that Abhirati Buddhaland. It is said that the famous Upasaka Vimalakirti is the person transformed from the land of Abhirati Buddhaland.

3.5 Ratna Sambhava Buddha

He is one of five Tathagatas symbolizing wisdom of equality (skt. *Samatajnana*). According to the commentary of Namasangiti, the author Ravisri says;

> "All the phenomena is devoid of essence, lacks true inherent existence and hence is dream like or illusion or is empty".

Thus the knowledge of essencelessness of persons and the phenomena is the wisdom of equality: Buddha Ratnasambhava is the personification of this wisdom in Vajrayana Buddhism.

In the extant literature he is rarely described about his vows, aspirations and activity. He is usually called the Buddha born form jewel.

He is yellow in color. He belongs to the Buddha family of Jewel. He is placed in the stupa facing to the south. He shows varada mudra with his right hand. He holds cintamani

jewel in his left hand kept on his lap. He also represents the purified form of the defilement pride. He rides on the horse throne symbolizing that he ferries over the suffering sentient beings with full vigor. He resides in the pure abode of Ratnavati heaven (buddha field).

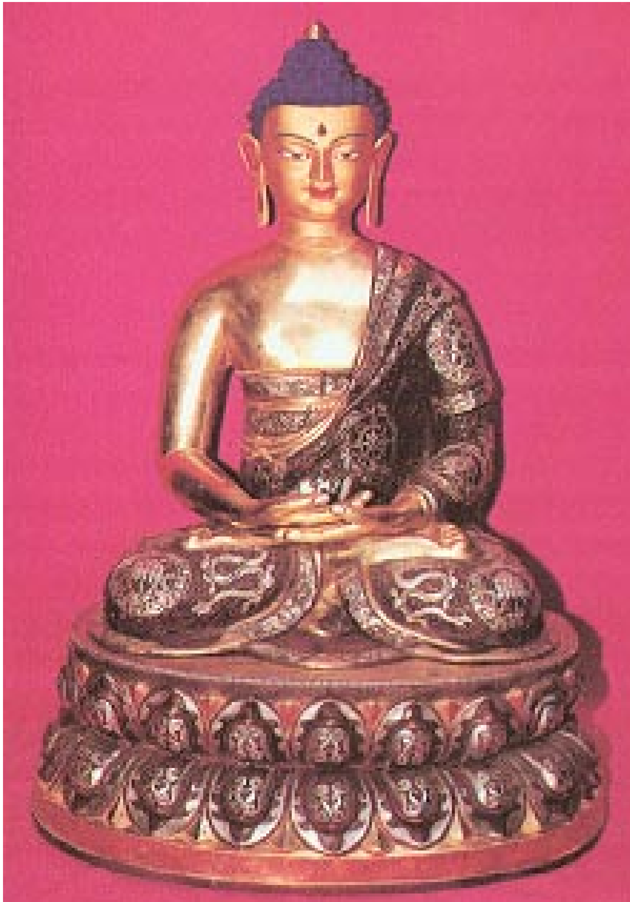
It is said that when Ratna Sambhava Buddha attained enlightenment golden colored rays emitted from his crown and manifested limitless golden colored bodhisattvas; each one of them carrying jeweled scepters emitting light shining on the southern worlds, which were numerous as the sands of the Ganges.

It is said that the sentient beings' wish would be fulfilled when one sees the golden colored light. It is also said that by meditating on Ratna Sambhava Buddha's body, one's desire would be fulfilled.

3.6 Amitabha Buddha

Amitabha Buddha is also one of the five Tathagatas representing the wisdom of discriminating awareness (skt. ***Pratyavekshanajnana***). When discriminating wisdom dawns on us we realize Non-production or non-origination of all ihings. He also represents purified form of desire.

Amitabha Buddha is red in color. He is represented in the stupa facing to the west. He rides on peacock symbolizing that he can take away the suffering of others just as the peacock eats poisonous plants and yet his tail shines forth.



Buddha
‹ Amitabha
(bronze)



Buddha
Amoghasiddhi ›
(bronze)

Amitabha in Sanskrit means immeasurable light or limitless light. He resides in the western land of unlimited bliss (skt. *Sukhavati*). He is assisted by two bodhisattvas viz. Avalokiteshvara and Mahasthamprapta.

When he was a bodhisattva he was called Bhikshu Dharmakara. He made 48 vows to establish an adorned land of unlimited bliss to ferry over those living beings who recite his name. On the basis of those vows, any living being who has faith, makes vows and practices diligently will be received by this Buddha and reborn in the pure land of unlimited bliss.

Amitabha Buddha presides over the Bhadrakalpa i.e. Fortunate Aeon. He always exhibits Dhyana mudra. He belongs to the Lotus family. He originates from the seed syllable *Hrih*. He can be recognized through the symbol of the lotus.

With his extensive vows and great compassion this Buddha has ferried over innumerable sentient beings. The recitation of the name of Amitabha Buddha is a common practice in China and Japan. In Tibet too, devotees recite very often the prayer to be reborn in the land of Amitabha Buddha.

3.7 Amogh Siddhi Buddha

Amoghsiddhi Buddha is the last among the Five Buddhas. He represents the All Accomplishing Wisdom (skt. ***Krityanusthan jnana***). He also represents the purified form of jealosy. When one realizes All Accomplishing Wisdom one can

perform all the Buddha activity without pre-meditation. This happens spontaneously.

Amoghsiddhi is green in colour. He is represented in the stupa facing to the north. He rides on Garuda symbolizing that he can detect the presence of serpent-like delusion from a distance. A serpent with seven hoods and an umbrella is depicted on the background. He exhibits abhayamudra showing that by following bodhisattva path fearlessness is gained.

Like Ratna Sambhava Buddha, the vows, activity and deeds of Amogh Siddhi Buddha are not extant in Mahayana Buddhist literature. It is however said that cultivators relying on this Buddha's protection will achieve accomplishments in Buddhist affairs and worldly matters and will perfect the work benefitting sentient beings.

Amogh Siddhi Buddha alone has a canopy of snakes over his head. He sometimes resembles Shakyamuni Buddha with nine headed Naga king Mucalinda in paintings.

According to tantric text, this Buddha is said to be originated from seed syllable green ***Kham***. He is also said to be the embodiment of volition (skt. ***Sanskara***) and Air element (skt. ***Vayu***).

3.8 Bhaisajyaguru Vaiduryaprabha Tathagata (Medicine Buddha)

Bhaisajya Tathagata is called Healing Buddha or Medicine Buddha. He is able to cure the sickness of birth and death. His

body is bright, like lapislazuli. He resides in the eastern world of purified lapislazuli. He is assisted by two bodhisattvas called Sutyaprabha and Candraprabha, to transform and teach living beings in that land.

The usual colour of Bhaisajya Tathagata was blue or lapislazuli in colour. But he had also golden colour. His right hand held a branch of the myrobalan in varadamudra gesture. His left hand is in the lap holding a pindapatra (alms bowl).

The blue or lapislazuli color of this body symbolizes that he takes all the diseases and sickness of the suffering beings unto himself. The plant myrobalan signifies the medicine which heals all the sickness of sentient beings.

According to the Bhaisajyaguru Buddha Sutra, he made 12 great vows before his attainment of Buddhahood. The important vows are as follows: to eliminate sickness from all living beings and make them feel easy and happy in order to attain Buddhahood; and to liberate beings from disasters and calamities. It is said that the land of Bhaisajya Buddha is genuinely pure. In that land the ground is paved with purified lapislazuli. The cities, buildings and palaces are made of seven jewels. In that land the sentient beings do not commit any evil deeds hence there is no lower realm. It can well be compared with Sukhavati Heaven of Buddha Amitabha.

In Tibetan medical tradition Bhaisajya Buddha is said to be the source of all medical treatises. This Buddha is invoked for eliminating disasters and sickness of all varieties.



Buddha
‹ *Aparimita*
(bronze)



Buddha
Bhaisajya ›
(bronze)

3.9 Amitayus or Buddha Aparimita

Buddha Aparimita is very popular in bestowing long life upon the devotees. He is red in colour. His two hands are in dhyana mudra and holds an ambrosia vase (skt. *Amrit kalasha*). He usually wears all the ornaments of different kinds peculiar to a Sambhogakaya Buddha. He is never depicted with any consort. He wears a crown and has Ushnisha and Urnakosh in his body.

Buddha Aparimita is invoked or worshipped for lengthening the life span or fast relief from dreadful diseases or from mortal danger. In Nepalese Mahayana tradition the dharani of Buddha Aparimita is often recited by the devotees in the presence of dying patients. The recitation of this dharani is said to be efficacious when carried out in utter sincerity. It is said that the famous Madhayamika Buddhist philosopher Arya Nagarjuna had escaped his early death after recitation of this dharani for one complete day and night.

3.10 Buddha Durgatiparisodhanaraja

When the Buddha Shakyamuni enters into a special type of samadhi called Sarvadurgatiparisodhana i.e. elimination of all evil destinies, it is called Buddha Durgatiparisodhanaraja. This sculpture is really very rare. But there are many paintings of this deity in Nepal.

He is yellow in colour. He exhibits Dharmacakramudra and has one face and two arms only. He is described in the

Durgatisodhana mandala of Nispannayogavali. His dharani is very popular among Nepalese Buddhists and it is very often recited in front of a dead body or in funeral ceremonies. At the request of Devaraja Indra, Buddha Shakyamuni, out of compassion for the deva Vimalamaniprabha, who was reborn in Avici Hell, delivered the dharani of Durgatiparisodhana which can liberate beings from the hells like Avici.

Buddha ›
Aparimita
(bronze)





Buddha Shakyamuni
(Mahabodhi Temple, Patan) (bronze)

IV. Nirmanakaya Representation

4.1 Buddha Dipamkara

In Buddhist tradition the Buddhas of three times is often mentioned. The Pali Buddhavamsa counts 24 Past Buddhas, including Dipamkara as the first. While in Mahayana Buddhist tradition the number of Buddhas increases much more. The Sarvastivada tradition counts 75,000 Buddhas commencing with Shakyamuni and ends before Buddha Ratnasikhin during the First Asamkheya Kalpa. During the second Asamkheya Kalpa, 76,000 Buddhas from Buddha Ratnasikhin to Dipamkara and during the third Asamkheya 77,000 Buddhas from Dipamkara to Vipasyin Buddha are counted.

Buddha Dipamkara is represented widely in Kathmandu valley. Especially in the month of the Gunla Festival many large sized images in bronze and copper are displayed in Nepalese Buddhist monasteries. In the Samyak festival Buddha Dipamkara is the chief deity to be displayed and worshipped.

The Buddha Dipamkara is usually yellow in colour and exhibits abhayamudra and varada mudra with his two hands.

It is believed that Shakyamuni Buddha started his bodhisattva career after meeting with Buddha Dipamkara. When Buddha Dipamkara was visiting the city of Dipavati, a young brahman versed in vedic lore happened to pass by the city of Dipavati fully decorated with hanners and in festive

mood to honor Buddha Dipamkara. He also happened to meet a young brahman girl with seven lotus flowers, going to honor Lord Dipamkara. The learned Brahman Megha asked the lady to give him seven lotus flowers for 500 gold coins. But she refused and agreed to give him five flowers under the condition that she can become his wife until he attained enlightenment. After that Megha Brahman saw Buddha Dipamkara from a distance. Identifying himself with Buddha Dipamkara he made a strong vow that he will become a Buddha in future. Thrilled and inspired after seeing the Buddha he threw five lotus flowers in a prayer and the young girl who was to become Yasodhara also threw two flowers in the same manner. These seven lotus flowers formed a garland and floated in the air around the Buddha's head in a miraculous way. Later on Buddha Dipamkara too, prophesied that he would be a Buddha Shakyamuni in future.

4.2 Buddha Vipashvi

Buddha Vipashvi is said to have planted the seed of lotus from Nagarjuna hill, on a big lake called Nagadaha (now Kathmandu valley). At that time Satyadharma Bodhisattva, who was to become Shakyamuni Buddha, was accompanying Vipashvi Buddha. Lord Vipashvi Buddha threw a lotus seed into the lake. When his disciples asked why he did so, Lord Vipashvi Buddha explained that there would appear a self-originated divine light, a manifestation of Primordial Buddha

from Akanistha Bhuvan and people would call it Swayambhu.

He also predicted that in the future Bodhisattva Manjushree will drain the water off from the valley and make it a habitable land. The Jatamatrochcha hill is thus blessed by lord Vipashvi Buddha. A big white caitya was constructed there to commemorate the visit of lord Vispashvi Buddha. On the memory of planting of lotus seed by Vipashvi Buddha a festival is held even today in the month of March every year.

Lord Vipashvi was born in the city of Bandhumati, ninety-one aeons (kalpa) ago. His parents were Bandhuman and Bandhumati. His wife was Sutan. Samvattakhanda was his son. He enjoyed his worldly life for 8,000 years. He practiced the austerities for 8 months after his great renunciation. His Mahaparinirvana took place at the age of 80,000 years in Sunittaramna. His sculptures are not genereally available. But usually he is depicted in bhumisparsa mudra and with yellow or golden color.

4.3 Sikhi Buddha

Sikhi Buddha was born in Arunavati, 31 aeons ago according to textual sources. His parents were Aruna and Prabhavati. His wife was Sabbakama and his son was Atula. He was called Sikhi because his Usnisa stood up like sikha (flame). He enjoyed the worldly life for 7,000 years. After his Mahabhiniskramana i.e. great renunciation, he practised penance



Buddha
‹ *Vipashvi*

Buddha
Bishvabhu ›



for eight months. He attained enlightenment under the foot of a pundarika tree. His body was sixty cubits in height. His great parinirvana took place in Silavati at the age of 70,000 years. During his life time he visited Swayambhu Ksetra knowing that a self-originated divine light had appeared over a beautifully bloomed thousand petalled lotus. He came with his disciples including Kshemaraja Grihapati who was to become Shakyamuni Buddha later on. Sikhi Buddha is said to have composed a hymn in praise of lord Swayambhu and mingled himself with lord Swayambhu. According to Swayambhu Purana, Buddha Sikhi predicted that from the root of the lotus an image of Nairatmya devi would appear. The discourse with such prediction took place on Dhyanochcha Mountain of Kathmandu valley. He is usually depicted in abhayamudra.

4.4 Buddha Bishvabhu

Buddha Bishvabhu was born in the city of Anuparam/Anoma. His parents were the king Sujita and Queen Yasavati. His wife was Sucitta and his son Suppa Buddha. He enjoyed his wordly life for six thousand years. After his great renunciation he practiced the penance for six months. He attained enlightenment under the Sala tree. At that time Bodhisattva Parvatakshya who was to become Shakyamuni later, was with Bishvabhu Buddha. He came to pay homage to Swayambhu with this bodhisattva. Buddha Bishvabhu offered 125,000 flowers from the eastern mountain called Fullochcha now called Fulchowk.

Sikhi Buddha ›





Buddha ‹ Krakuchchanda

Buddha Bislivabhu also predicted that the Kathmandu valley would have many sacred power places (skt. ***tirtha*** and ***vitaraga***). At the base of this mountain a fountain from of stream will appear and those who desire water will get it there.

Buddha Bishvabhu remained in this world for 60,000 years and passed away in Nirvana at the place called Khomarama. He is depicted in Dharmacakramudra.

4.5 Buddha Krakuchchanda

Buddha Krakuchchanda was the first buddha of the current aeon which is called Fortunate Aeon (skt. ***Bhadrakalpa***). According to the Bhadrakalpika Sutra it is said that one thousand Buddhas would appear in succession. The present Buddha Shakyamuni is the fourth.

Buddha Krakuchchanda was born in the city of Ksemavati. His parents were brahmana Agnidutta and Visakha/Visvacini Devi. His wife was Virocamana and his son was Uttara. He enjoyed his worldy life for 4,000 years. After his great renunciation he practised penance for eight months. He attained supreme enlightenment at the foot of Sirisa tree. He gave his first sermon to 84,000 monks near the city of Makila. In the course of his buddha activity he visited Kathmandu valley to pay homage to lord Swayambhu with his disciples including the king of Saketa Dharmapala, the priest Gunadhoj brahmana and many others. At that time, Jyotipala Bodhi-

sattva, who was to become Shakyamuni later, was serving the Buddha Krakuchchanda with great faith and devotion. The Buddha Krakuchchanda after paying homage to lord Swayambhu and Nairatmya Devi, ascended on the Siddhifullochcha hill i.e. Northern hill of Kathmandu valley, popularly known these days as Shivapuri Hill.

The Buddha Krakuchchanda gave many different kinds of teachings on Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana. He delivered specially 37 factors of enlightenment in this mountain area. Seven hundred monks were given initiation. At that time there were no traces of water. The Buddha Krakuchchanda through his miraculous utterance issued forth a stream of water and hence the name Bagmati. He is depicted in varadamudra with the left hand holding the fold of the robe.

4.6 Buddha Kanakamuni

Buddha Kanakamuni (also called Konagamana) was the second Buddha of this Bhadrakalpa. He was born in Shobhavati. His parents were brahmana Yakshadutta and Uttarani. His wife was Rucigatta and his son was Sarthavaha. He enjoyed this worldly pleasure for three thousand years. After his renunciation he practised his austerities for six months. He attained his supreme enlightenment at the foot of an Udumbara tree. His first sermon was attended by 30,000 monks near Sudarsana Nagara. His body was 30 cubits high. He passed away at the Pabbatarama at the age of 30,000 years.



Buddha
‹ *Kanakamuni*



Buddha
Kasyapa ›

During his career Buddha Kanakamuni also visited Swayambhu Kshetra in Kathmandu valley. After his Parinirvana, a stupa was erected near Kapilavastu at Niglihawa in the Western Terai region of Nepal. This has been confirmed by the Ashokan inscription.

Buddha Kanakamuni is generally represented as yellow in colour. His right hand has Abhayamudra and his left hand is in dhyana mudra.

4.7 Buddha Kasyapa

Buddha Kasyapa was the third Buddha of this fortunate aeon. He was born in the city of Benaras. He was from brahman family. His parents were Brahmadutta and Dhanavati. His wife was Sunanda and his son Vijitasena. He enjoyed this worldly life for two thousand years. He practiced the penance only for seven days. He attained supreme enlightenment under the Banyan tree. He gave his first sermon to 10 million monks. His body was 20 cubits high. He passed away at Sotavya in Benaras at the age of 20,000 years.

During his buddha activity he also visited Swayambhu Ksetra to pay homage to Swayambhu Mahacaitya. At that time Jyoti Raj Bodhisattva, who was to become Shakyamuni Buddha, was following Buddha Kasyapa along with such chief disciples as Tisya, Uttama and Sotthita. After performing homage to lord Swayambhu he returned to his country. He then went to Gaud (Orissa?). In that city there lived a pious

king Prachanda Deva, who used to subdue his enemies and appreciated the deeds of the sage. After obtaining blessings and instructions from Kasyapa Tathagata he went to Kathmandu renouncing his kingdom. King Prachanda Deva paid homage to lord Swayambhu and became a disciple of Acarya Gunakara. Acarya Gunakara ordained and initiated him in the mysteries of Sutras and Tantras. He was then called Santikar Acarya. Acarya Santikar, thinking of the later periods, when people with evil mind might destroy this self-originated divine light, decided to cover it by erecting a stupa over it. Bhikshu Gunakara gave him permission to construct a stupa and conferred on him the title of Vajracharya. After completing the stupa he went to the retreat in Santipur.

Buddha Kashyapa is always depicted as yellow in colour. His right hand shows Varada mudra and the left hand is in dhyana mudra. He always sits on a lion throne with a lotus.

4.8 Buddha Shakyamuni

Buddha Shakyamuni is the fourth Buddha of this fortunate aeon. As he has realized the potential of his inner being and has removed all the obscurations and has developed all the positive qualities, he is called a Buddha, a fully Awakened one. Of countless Buddhas who have appeared and will continue to appear on this earth, Buddha Shakyamuni was the one who regenerated the teachings of Enlightened beings for our present era.

Shakyamuni Buddha was born in Kapilavastu in Nepal some 2,600 years ago and performed many buddha activities, for 45 years in this Indian sub-continent, for the benefit of all sentient beings. His most outstanding deed were the teachings which showed the path to liberation from the suffering of birth and death to the supreme enlightenment of Buddhahood. This is symbolized by Dharmacakra mudra of the Buddha. Buddha Shakyamuni out of compassion for all sentient beings taught many different kinds of teachings, mostly sutras and tantras to suit the varying degrees of intelligence of his disciples.

All the Sutra and Tantra teachings of the Buddha Shakyamuni are said to be the means of liberation or the path leading to Buddhahood. According to Swayambhu Purana, Buddha Shakyamuni also visited Swayambhu Caitya and delivered the teachings on the origin of Swayambhu Stupa upon the request of Bodhisattva Maitreya.

The images of Buddha Shakyamuni can be found in large numbers carved in various materials like stone, metals, claywire, or in paintings or other forms. He is depicted in various postures. Most popular Buddha images found in Nepal are in Bhumisparsa mudra i.e. earth touching gesture with yellow robe. He has Usnisha, on the crown of the head, Urnakosha between eyebrows and long lobed ears. He is golden in color. He has 32 major and 80 minor marks of Sambhogakaya Buddha. He is always seen with pinda patra (alms bowl) over the hand on the lap. He can also be seen in vitarka mudra, dhyana mudra, dharmacakramudra, and other mudras.



Guru Nagajuna

V. Gurus

5.1 Guru Nagarjuna

Guru Nagarjuna lived in India 2,000 years ago. He flourished in the second half of the second century of the Christian era. He was a contemporary friend of the Satavahana king Gautamiputra Yajnasri (166–196 A.D.). He came from a wealthy brahmin family from Vidarbha. He went to Nalanda where he became a disciple of the great sage Rahula Bhadra and underwent a thorough training in all five branches of learning.

After his ordination he remained for sometime a monk of Sarvastivada and later changed into Mahayana. In the course of his career as a wandering monk he came across a treatise of Prajnaparamita Sutras. He composed a series of treatise on Madhyamika philosophy based on Prajnaparamita Sutras. His six works on Madhyamika philosophy are well known to the Buddhist world. They are as follows: 1. Mula Madhyamika Sastra, 2. Sunyata Saptati, 3. Yukti Sastika, 4. Vigrahavyavartani, 5. Ratnavali, 6. Vaidalyaprakaran.

Nagarjuna developed a system of philosophy called Madhyamika based on the Buddha's original sutras. He expounded the true meaning of sunyata based on four point analysis (skt. *Catuskoti*). According to him all the phenomena and the person have no true existence of their own. They are all dependently originated and cannot have their independent existence. To realize Nirvana, according to him is to realize Emptiness

in all its depth. Later on his philosophy was nurtured and enhanced by Arya Deva, Candrakirti, Buddhapalita and Acarya Santi Deva. The Vajrayana doctrine of Nepal is usually based on Madhyamika as well as Yogacara doctrines.

In its sculpture and paintings Nagarjuna is seen as a bodhisattva with nine serpents around his head. He is generally seen in Dharmacakra mudra i.e. teaching mudra symbolizing teaching of the doctrine of emptiness to all sentient beings in order to eliminate ego-grasping. He wears a saffron coloured robe and sits on a cushion proper for a dharma master.

5.2 Guru Padma Sambhava

Guru Padma Sambhava is popularly known as Guru Rinpoche, the precious teacher. He was a powerful Tantric Buddhist Master who was invited to Tibet in the eighth century to diffuse the Buddhism in Tibet. He subdued many harmful influences and forces that hindered the spread of compassionate teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni. Through his miraculous powers and enlightened experiences, he taught many disciples who came out to be perfect masters of Tantric Buddhism. He is said to have twenty-five great disciples who were instrumental in preserving the sacred teachings of Lord Buddha till today through their various manifestations.

Guru Rinpoche is said to have eight manifestations called Guru Tsangye in peaceful and wrathful postures. Through them he caused Vajrayana dharma to spread widely in Nepal,



‹ *Guru Padma Sambhava (bronze)*

India, Bhutan and Tibet. Guru Rinpoche is revered as founder of Nyingma or ancient tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Tibetans believe Guru Rinpoche is no different from Shakyamuni Buddha himself.

Guru Rinpoche's body is depicted as golden in color. His hat is usually red. So Nyingmapa is generally called red hat sect of Tibetan Buddhism. He wears different robes of differing colors symbolizing his enlightened experiences and attainments. His inner garment is white symbolizing clear light aspect of his mind and the outer garment is of a red color which means he has

deep and great compassion for all sentient beings. His outermost coat is brown symbolizing his renunciation. He is seated upon a lotus of alternating blue with red and green with orange petals.

5.3 Guru Naropa

Guru Naropa lived in India about 900 years ago. He was a great learned man versed in Sutras, Tantras and many other ancient lores. During his stay in the famous Nalanda monastery his intellectual accomplishment was foremost and without any match. But his intellectual pride was humbled by an old lady who was an emanation of Vajrayogini. At that time,



Guru Naropa

she also suggested him to consult Guru Tilopa for the real understanding of Mahamudra.

Naropa searched for Guru Tilopa exerting much effort. His arduous search and devotion to Guru Tilopa has become a legend in itself. Naropa found Guru Tilopa by the bank of a river. He was dressed like a mad man and was eating fish which was unusual for a holy man. Naropa underwent training under him for about twelve years and received the inner transmission of Mahamudra practice. The profound Mahamudra teachings was received by Guru Tilopa directly from Buddha Vajradhara. Naropa is generally dressed in the white lower garments of a yogi. His body is of an ash colour like that of a wandering mendicant. His left hand holds a skull cup filled with nectar and his right hand shows varada mudra. He sits in Lalitasana posture under an antilope mat. He wears a meditation band on his waist.

5.4 Guru Atisha

Guru Atisha is popularly known as Acarya Dipamkarasrijnana. He lived some 1,000 years ago (982–1054 A.D.). He was born in a royal family of Bengal. From a very young age he studied and mastered many scriptural texts on various subjects. He went to Sumatra, an arduous journey lasting for 13 months, to meet the illustrious master of Bodhisattva tradition honoured and respected as Guru Suvarnadvipa. He received teachings on Mind Training in completeness.



Guru
‹ *Atisha*



Guru
Marpa ›

He was invited to Tibet to eliminate all the mistakes and misunderstanding concerning the teachings of Hinayana, Mahayana and Tantrayana. He established Kadampa sect in Tibet through his Tibetan disciple Drontonpa.

Guru Atisha is generally seen seated in Vajra posture with dhannacakra mudra. A Kadam style stupa is usually seen on his right side symbolizing awakened mind and the stages of path to Enlightenment.

5.5 Guru Marpa

Guru Marpa was the founder of Kagyudpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. He was born in 1012 A.D. in the region of Lobrak Tibet, right above the border of Bhutan. In his childhood he quickly learned reading and writing. He learnt Sanskrit from Drogmi Lotsava who was well versed in Path and Fruition doctrine of Sakyapa tradition. Having been frustrated with his inability to learn more teachings from Drogmi he toured India three times via Nepal. Guru Marpa had two Nepali Gurus, Paindapa and Chitherpa from whom he learnt the Cakrasamvara and Catuhpith tantras for three years. These two Nepalese teachers gave Guru Marpa a great deal of dharma instruction and language. Guru Marpa with his great zeal and assiduity learnt the vast range of tantric teachings from Naropa, Maitripa, Kukkuripa and others. He came back to Tibet with these vast resources and taught his disciples extensively. Among his disciples, Tibet's great yogi Milarepa

was the foremost and he had many outstanding disciples of his own through whom Kagyudpa lineage is continued uninterruptedly till today.

Guru Marpa is said to be a very fat one with hair standing five fingers straight up off his head and with angry looking face. But in some commentaries of Venerable Karma Chagme, he is described as having matted hair and wearing a chuba with big Chinese style sleeves and a large cap.

5.6 Guru Milarepa

Guru Milarepa is believed to be the most beloved and highly accomplished Buddhist master of Tibet. His songs on enlightened experiences are still sung today by the learned and lay people alike. Guru Milarepa during his early career committed many evil deeds through black magic, and sending hailstorms too. He later regretted his evil deeds and eventually found his worthy and enlightened Guru Marpa, who put him on trials and hardships in other to test his guru devotion and eagerness to practice dharma teachings. He later conferred on him the series of empowerments and essential teachings of Mahamudra which he received from Guru Naropa. Guru Milarepa meditated on these tantric teachings with great zeal in wild and forlorn mountains for 6 years and eventually achieved the realization of Vajradharahood in his very life time.

Millions of devotees took inspiration from his practice and verification of Buddhist teachings.



Guru
‹ Milarepa
(bronze)



Guru
Tsonghkapa ›

Guru Milarepa is generally seen in a cotton-clad dress seated on antilope skin with Lalitasana posture. He wears a meditation band. His right hand is generally put on the ears symbolizing that he is listening to the voices of beings in lower realms. He has great compassion for them and sentient beings in general. His body is usually blue or green in colour. It is said that during his meditation he ate nothing but nettles for the long period of time and his skin thus assumed a greenish hue. Sometimes to represent his realizations, his body is depicted golden in color too.

5.7 Guru Tson Khapa

Guru Tson Khapa appeared in Tibet in the fourteenth century as the great revitalizer of Tibetan Buddhism. He is also known as Je Rinpoche. He is believed to be the manifestation of Guru Rinpoche himself. Guru Tson Khapa emphasized the value of discipline in monastic institutions and the value of academic pursuits and practice. He founded the Gelugpa tradition and among his closest disciple was Gedun Drub, later known as the First Dalai Lama.

Guru Tson Khapa popularized the theme of Lamrim i.e. Stages of the path to Enlightenment introduced in Tibet by Guru Atisha. He is said to be the emanation of Bodhisattva Manjushree. He is shown holding a sword and a book. His body is radiant white with reddish glow. He sits upon sun and moon discs in lotus throne. He wears the traditional monastic robes and is crowned with a pandit yellow hat.

5.8 Guru Sakya Pandit

Guru Sakya Pandit is said to be one of the three manifestation of Manjushree — the other two being the great Nyingma Lama Long Chen Rabjampa and Gelugpa Lama Guru Tson Khapa.

Guru Sakya Pandit was an immensely learned lama versed in five branches of learning. In Tibet he was recognized as master debater at par with Indian Guru Dharmakirti. He vanquished all his opponents, both buddhists and non-buddhists in debate. On hearing the erudition of Sakya Pandit, Mongol Prince Godan invited him to his capital. Since then the abbots of Shakya monastery entered into a new era in the Tibetan political scenario. (1270–1340).

Guru Sakya Pandit propagated the system of Path and Fruit doctrine (skt. *Margaphala siddhant*). Being an emanation of Manjushree he is also generally depicted holding a sword and a book.

Guru Sakya Pandita › *(bronze)*



VI. Great Eight Bodhisattvas

6.1 Samantabhadra Bodhisattva

Amongst the bodhisattvas of the high rank Samantabhadra stands prominent. His activities are mentioned in Gandavyuha sutra. His most popular practice, known as Samantabhadra Carya, is a household name for the Nepalese Buddhist.

Samantabhadra is represented with a crown, ornaments and princely garments of a bodhisattva typical of Sambhogakaya aspect. He holds Cintamani in his left hand and supports a blue lotus at his left shoulder. His right hand displays vitarka mudra. His posture may be either seated or standing. In Nispannayogavali, he is described as yellow in colour, showing the varadamudra in his right hand and holding the sword on lotus on his left hand.

He is also depicted as golden-yellow in colour. He holds a bunch of jewels in the right hand and the left hand rests on the hip. According to a legend concerning Samantabhadra, it is said that Kathmandu valley was once a great lake measuring 14 km by 14 km in size. At the center of this lake blossomed a thousand petalled lotus where there was a flame of self-existing wisdom i.e. Swayambhu. Many sages and devas used to bathe in this lake and pay homage to Lord Swayambhu. Knowing that a self-existing Buddha had appeared in the lake Lord Manju Deva Acarya, an emanation of Bodhisattva Manjushree, from Wu-tai-shan mountain of Great China, came to Kathmandu



Samantabhadra Bodhisattva

to drain water from the lake so as to make it a habitable land as the legend narrates. This act of Manjudeva Acarya enraged Kulika Nagaraja who began to obstruct its outlets thus ponding water once again into the lake. As a result, many people suffered due to floods and destruction of houses. The people began to take refuge in Lord Avalokiteshvara for protection. In the mean time Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva sent Samantabhadra Bodhisattva for the purpose of relieving the sufferings of the people in Kathmandu. Samantabhadra subdued Kulika Naga and also inspired him to practice dharma and gave many blessings.

In Buddhist practice Samantabhadra Bodhisattva is very famous for his extensive ten great vows and sevenfold worship. His grandeur is well presented in the Lotus sutra and Gandavyuha sutra.

6.2 Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva

Among the great eight Bodhisattvas, Ksitigarbha stands prominent for his great compassion and vows for the sake of suffering beings residing in hells. In the Buddhist Pantheon, he is one of the most highly celebrated bodhisattvas in the category of Manjushree, Avalokiteshvara, and Samantabhadra. These four represent the four basic qualities of the Buddha i.e. Manjushree for great wisdom; Avalokiteshvara for his great compassion; Samantabhadra for his great meritorious deeds; and



Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva

Ksitigarbha for his great vows (to help and liberate all sentient beings residing in the hells). The famous pronouncement of Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha "If I do not go to hell to help them there, who else will go?" is the manifestation of this profound vow.

Ksitigarbha is depicted wearing fivefold ornaments. He is in standing posture with his right hand in vitarka mudra and left hand in varada mudra. His symbol is the Cintamani jewel which is in the shape of a flaming pearl, supported by a lotus flower. He is also represented in a seated position holding a staff with his two hands. In Sadhanamala he is of green colour and shows in his two hands the jar and Abhayamudra.

In Chinese Turkestan he is represented as a good judge of the infernal regions surrounded by ten kings of hells. He wears the usual headdress of which both ends hang over the shoulders, and carries an alarm staff to force open the gates of hell. In his left hand he holds the luminous pearl which dispels the darkness of the hell regions. Below the lotus on which he is seated, is his vahana, a winged lion.

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva through his miraculous powers appears throughout ten direction in an innumerable forms of transformed bodies in order to lead even the most obstinate and deluded living beings to follow the path of the Buddha. The essence of his great vows is the filial piety. To be filial to one's parents is the practice of filial piety. The filial practice of Ksitigarbha bodhisattva is not limited to one's parents but to all the sentient beings, who are infinite.

6.3 Akashgarbha or Khagarbha Bodhisattva

Khagarbha Bodhisattva is represented in standing posture with his hands in vitarka and varada mudra. His symbol is the sun upon a book. A graceful drapery falls from his waist and a long narrow scarf is tied around the body from the left shoulder to the right hip. His hair is drawn up in a stupa shaped ushnisha.

According to the Akashgarbha sutra, Lord Buddha has praised him highly thus 'His dhyana is as deep as the sea, his pure precept is as high as mountain, his wisdom is worthy of receiving the best offerings from all living beings. His merit and virtue are unsurpassed'. It is said that he is twenty yojana in height manifesting a great body. He wears a crown which manifests 35 images of Buddhas of confession. His power of compassion is just like Avalokiteshvara. He benefits living beings continuously. It is said that when a beginner bodhisattva commits a crime and confesses just once before Akashgarbha Bodhisattva their evils will be eliminated and they will be purified immediately.

According to the Swayambhu legend, when Odiayana Acarya was meditating in a mountain near Swayambhu hill he desired to have a vision of Akashgarbha Bodhisattva and hence he blew a conch shell. In the meantime Akashgarbha Bodhisattva with a view to bless Odiayana Acarya appeared in front of him and gave many blessings to him. He manifested

a stream of brilliant light and entered into a boulder and vanished. Akashgarbha Bodhisattva predicted then that he would be the famous Acarya Bandhudatta who would bring Arya Avalokiteshvara from Assam and conduct a chariot festival in the Kathmandu valley and gain liberation thereby at the feet of Arya Avalokiteshvara. So the place where Akashgarbba Bodhisattva issued forth a stream of light is called Adi-shvara near Swayambhu hill.

6.4 Sarvanivarana Vishkambhin

Bodhisattva Sarvanivarna Vishkambhin is also a celebrated Bodhisattva mentioned in the Guna Karandavyuha sutra who effaces all the sins of the devotees.

He is either blue or white in colour. He displays the Bhumisparsa mudra with his left hand and Santikaran mudra with his right hand (thumb and index finger being joined to form a loop).

In some instances he is also described as blue in colour. He holds a sword with his right hand and holds the banner marked with a Visvavajra in his left hand.

In Gunakarandavyuha sutra, it says that when Buddha Shakyamuni was about to give a discourse on this sutra, he sat in an ecstatic samadhi called Sarvasansodhana i.e. the purifier of everything. Golden rays of light illuminating the whole province were seen originating from some unknown region in that place. At that time Bodhisattva Sarvanivarana was also



Akashagarbha
or
Khagharba
Bodhisattva



Sarvanivarana
Bodhisattva

present there. He was struck by that and asked the reason. Buddha Shakyamuni told him that Lord Avalokiteshvara was preaching for the sinners of Avici Hell and the rays, after purifying the sinners, were to come there to tame the ignorant and evil doers. Thereafter, at the request of Bodhisattva Sarvanivama, Lord Buddha performed many other discourse sessions over the grandeur of Avalokiteshvara and his philanthropic activities which are described in the Guna Karandavyuha sutra.

The Swayambhu legend states that Great Odiayana Acarya from Kapilavastu came to Kathmandu to pay homage to Lord Swayambhu. He once sat in meditation on the southern mountain with a view to obtain great eight powers (skt. ***astasiddhi***). He then performed a fire puja or yajna where he sacrificed live fishes (skt. ***Matsya ahuti***). Pleased with this act of sacrifice, Kamadhenu cow blessed him and predicted that he would gain eight great powers in the near future. At this Lord Avalokiteshvara in his Sukhavati heaven understood that Odiyana Acarya was performing non-virtuous action due to his ignorance. In order to stop this act he called Bodhisattva Viskambhin and told him to go to the place where Odiyana Acarya was meditating. Bodhisattva Viskambhin thus stopped him from his wrong-doing and blessed him with eight great powers. Then Great Odiayana Acarya performed other austerities and sadhanas dedicated to Akasha yogini according to the instruction of Bodhisattva Vishkambhin. Later on Bodhisattva Vishkambhin issued a stream of light into a boulder

and Odiyana Acarya continued to pay homage to this sacred boulder as the emanation of Bodhisattva Vishkambhin. This boulder exists still near Pharping and called Phanikeshar Vitaraga.

6.5 Gaganganja Bodhisattva

He is also one of the great bodhisattvas among the group of eight bodhisattvas. He is either yellow or red in colour. His symbol is a Kalpa tree.

In some instance he is described as golden yellow in colour. He holds the vajra in his left hand while the right is pointed to the sky. In Tibetan Kanjur a special sutra dedicated to this Bodhisattva is extant with the name of Gaganganjasutra.

According to the Swayambhu legend Bodhisattva Gaganganja is said to have appeared in Kathmandu valley to bless Prince Gokarna who was a great sinner indulgeing in harsh and immoral speech with his father Vrisakarna.

As a result, the king sent him into exile. The king himself could not bear the evil deeds of his son and passed away with great despair. His spirit was roaming as a ghost for the same reason. He was not able to secure a happy rebirth. Later the prince also underwent torturous experiences as though from a hell realm in exile. Upon realizing his misdeeds, he later performed an act of penance in Punya Tirtha near Gokarna. Bodhisattva Gaganganja appeared in front of prince Gokarna and instructed him to perform the necessary death rituals and



Gaganganja Bodhisattva

offering ceremonies in honour of his deceased father. Bodhisattva Gaganganja told him that this act would definitely be helpful in securing a good rebirth for his deceased father. Since then Nepalese people are continuing to offer pinda dana to their deceased fathers in the day of Shravan Krishna i.e. new moon day of July–August. A monument dedicated to Bodhisattva Gaganganja still exists to this date in the Gokarna area where hundreds of devotees perform Astamivrata and ritual offerings.

6.6 Bodhisattva Vajrapani

Bodhisattva Vajrapani is the embodiment of the power of Lord Buddha's compassion. He is always depicted in wrathful aspect.

Vajrapani's body is blue in colour and his hair has yellow ochre. He wears a tiger skin around his waist. He is usually depicted in two arms aspect but can be seen in four arms aspect as well.

He is a major Bodhisattva easily recognized as holding a vajra with his right hand and left hand displaying threatening vitarka mudra. His body seems to be massive and in a pose of warrior. Under his feet he controls two live snakes. He wears all sorts of bodhisattva ornaments and also a garland of snakes. He has a wide and wild roaring mouth rimmed with lacquered red lips. His eyebrows are like the flame, with his moustache and beard being curled.



Arya
‹ Vajrapani
(bronze)



Arya
Manjushree ›
(bronze)

Vajrapani is often depicted with Avalokiteshvara and Manjushree representing the Buddha's power of compassion (Vajrapani), the great compassion (Avalokiteshvara) and the great wisdom (Manjushree).

Vajrapani's wrathfulness, snake ornament and his pose as a warrior all serve to convey the force and vitality of the enlightened energy as it combats ignorance, greed, fear and other delusions. Vajrapani is said to be the companion Bodhisattva of Buddha Shakyamuni. While the Buddha was residing at Gridhkuta hill, the site where Lord Buddha delivered the Prajnaparamita doctrines, his jealous cousin Devadutt attempted to assassinate him. He sent a huge boulder rolling down the hill, but just as it was about to hit the Buddha, Vajrapani appeared and split the boulder into pieces so that it could fall harmlessly near Buddha.

Another story is this that a brahman called Ambattha was abusing the Buddha with many vile and impure words. He saw Vajrapani appear in the sky with his wrathful aspect. Terrified of Vajrapani, Brahman Ambattha confessed his evil deeds in front of Buddha Shakyamuni.

6.7 Manjushree Bodhisattva

Manjushree is the embodiment of the characteristics of the Enlightened Mind i.e. Discriminating Wisdom. Manjushree has the ability to see the nature of reality as it is. He is seen holding the flaming sword of wisdom with his right hand and

a book called Prajnaparamita with his left hand. He has many names such as Manjuvajra, Manjughosa, Vagishvara, Arapacana, etc. In Mahayana Buddhist tradition he is regarded as having supreme wisdom among Bodhisattvas. He is also called prince of the Dharma because of his eloquent wisdom.

According to the Surangamasamadhi sutra, he became a Buddha in past immeasurable aeons ago although he manifests as the assistant to the Shakyamuni Buddha. According to the Manjushreevyuhalamkara Sutra, he was the teacher of countless Buddhas in the past and led numerous cultivators to certify the fruit of Buddhahood. He is thus called the Mother of all Buddhas in Three worlds. In Namasangiti text he is designated as Adi-Buddha, the primordial Buddha i.e. embodiment of All self-existing Awareness. He is said to have cut the gorge of Chovar hill with his flaming sword Chandrahasa and let the waters flow out and thereby opened the valley for human habitation and spread the Buddha dharma.

In Gandavyuha sutra it is said that Manjushree incited Bodhisattva Sudhana to seek dharmas of enlightenment from 53 Kalyanamitras.

Wu-Tai-Shah Mountain of Mainland China is said to be the bodhimanda of Manjushree.

6.8 Maitreya Bodhisattva

Maitreya Buddha is regarded as the Buddha to be born in the future, hence the name Future Buddha, of this fortunate



Arya Maitreya (silver)

aeon. It is said that his birth will take place in city of Ketumati (Banares ?) ruled by Cakravarti king Sankha. At that time the human beings will live for 80,000 years. It is said that Shakya-muni Buddha before leaving Tusita heaven announced that Maitreya would be his successor.

It is also said that Asanga, the renowned sage of the Mahayana, went to Tusita heaven to meet Maitreya and he was initiated into five doctrines or works viz:

1. Uttaratantra Sastra
2. Abhisamayalamkara
3. Mahayana Sutralamkara
4. Madhyanta Vibhaga Sastram
5. Dharma Dharmata Vibhaga Sastram

Maitreya as a Bodhisattva was quite popular in Theravada countries. His images can be found in Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand. His images can also be seen in China and Tibet.

Maitreya is yellow in color. He holds in his right hand the flower of Nagakeshar and with the left the mendicant bowl. When he is represented in Buddha posture, his hands show dharmacakra mudra with his legs down on the lotus.



VII. Forms Of Avalokitesvara

7.1 Padmapani Lokeshvara

Padmapani is also a form of Avalokiteshvara. He is generally seen standing at the right side of Buddha Amitabha in Sukhavati Heaven. He is depicted red in colour. He holds a lotus flower in his left hand and shows varada mudra with his right hand.

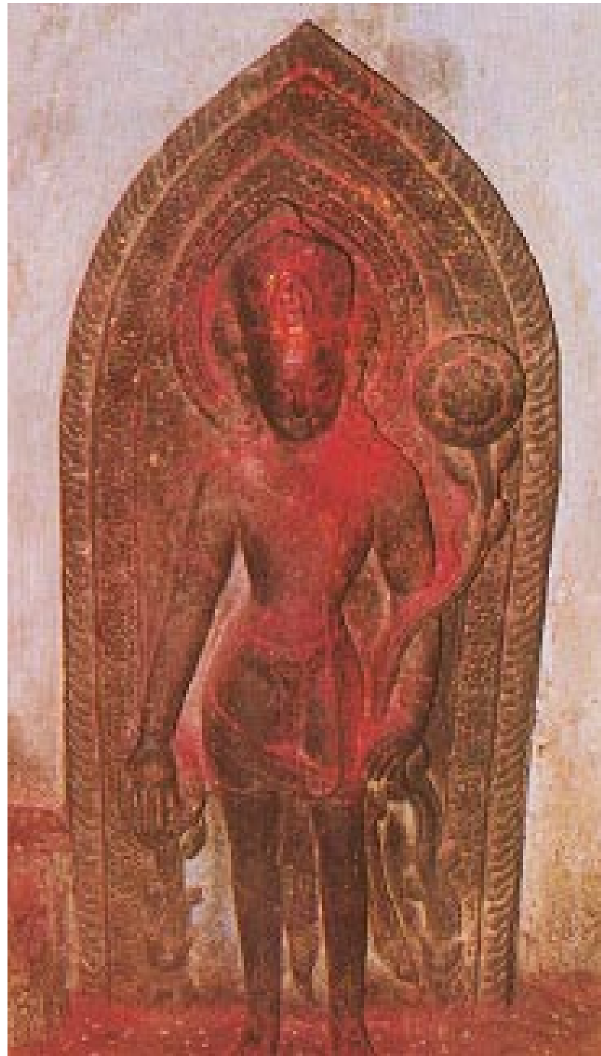
He wears an antilope skin on the shoulders. He wears all the ornaments typical of a bodhisattva symbolizing his enlightened experiences. He wears a crown and his hair is bound to form a top knot. Sometimes it is eclipsed by an effigy of Amitabha Buddha. When there is no effigy of Amitabha Buddha in the crown of Padmapani, he is then white in colour.

A legend says that once an elephant was going to pick up a lotus flower in a pond. Unfortunately he slipped into the mud. He cried in agony and prayed for Narayana. In the mean time Arya Avalokiteshvara was in that jungle and he heard the prayer. Immediately he took the form of Narayana and rescued the elephant from the marshy pond. Then Avalokiteshvara took the lotus offered by the elephant and went to Jetavana grove where Buddha Shakyamuni was residing. He in turn offered this lotus flower to Buddha Shakyamuni. Buddha Shakyamuni thanked Avalokiteshvara for his offer of the lotus flower and requested him to offer it to Lord Amitabha on his behalf. Avalokiteshvara told the whole story to Lord Amitabha

Buddha. Appreciating the philanthropic deeds of Avalokiteshvara, Buddha Amitabha told him to keep that lotus flower forever and continue the act of benefitting all sentient beings. Later on Avalokiteshvara was known as Padmapani Lokeshvara.

In Kathmandu valley nun.erous images of Padmapani Bodhisattva or Lokeshvara are found. Padmapani Lokeshvara found in Shreegha vihara in Kathmandu is believed to be of the fifth century of Christian era. According to Pandit Hem Raj Shakya 202 images or sculptures of Padmapani carved in stones are found in Patan city alone dating as early as the Lichchavi period.

Padmapani Lokeshvara (Stone) › (Swayambhu Museum)



7.2 Amoghpash Lokeshvara

Amoghpash Lokeshvara is a multi-armed form of Avalokiteshvara that seems to have been popular in Nepal since the middle ages. The name suggests that he is the Lord of the world with infallible noose which leads suffering sentient beings to enlightenment.



Amoghpash Lokeshvara

According to the Amoghpasa Hrdaya Dharani Sutra, ninety-one aeons ago Avalokiteshvara received the transmission of this Dharani from Lokeshvararaja Tathagata. Since then he used that dharani to teach limitless sentient beings. As Avalokiteshvara manifests transformed body (Nirmanakaya) and uses this dharani to ferry over sentient beings, he is then addressed as Amoghpasa. Amoghpasa is popular not only in Nepal but in all countries where Mahayana Buddhism has spread. The images of Amoghpasa can be found in Java, China and Japan. According to Dr. Luciano Petech, the image of Amoghpasa in its earliest form can be found in the Arya Amoghpasa Sutra preserved in Kaisar Library, Kathmandu.

Amoghpasa has one face and wears a saffron dress. He has eight hands with the right hands showing the gesture of fearlessness, the boon granting gesture, the noose and holding the string of beads while the left hands holding a trident, a scripture, a white lotus and a water pot.

He has three divine eyes looking on the triple world. His first right hand in abhayamudra symbolizes that one who practices Astami brata sincerely protects them from falling into lower realms. The second right hand displaying Varadamudra shows that those who practice and generate compassion and Bodhicitta receive all desirable objects. The third hand holding Amoghpasa or infallible noose symbolizes that he has infallible skill in means to convert ignorant sentient beings into the path of liberation. The fourth right

hand holding a rosary signifies that by the recitation of the six syllable mantras of Avalokiteshvara, one frees oneself from the bondage of samsara.

Again among four left hands, one holding a water pot signifies that he has the capacity of empowering all the sentient beings into Buddhahood. The second left hand holding a lotus signifies that he frees the sentient beings residing in hell realms from the suffering of intense heat and cold just like a lotus emerges from muddy water. The third left hand holding a trident signifies that he purifies three poisons of sentient beings i.e. lust, ill will and stupidity. The fourth left hand holding a scripture signifies that he imparts wisdom to the devotees and thereby they attain liberation from cyclic existence.

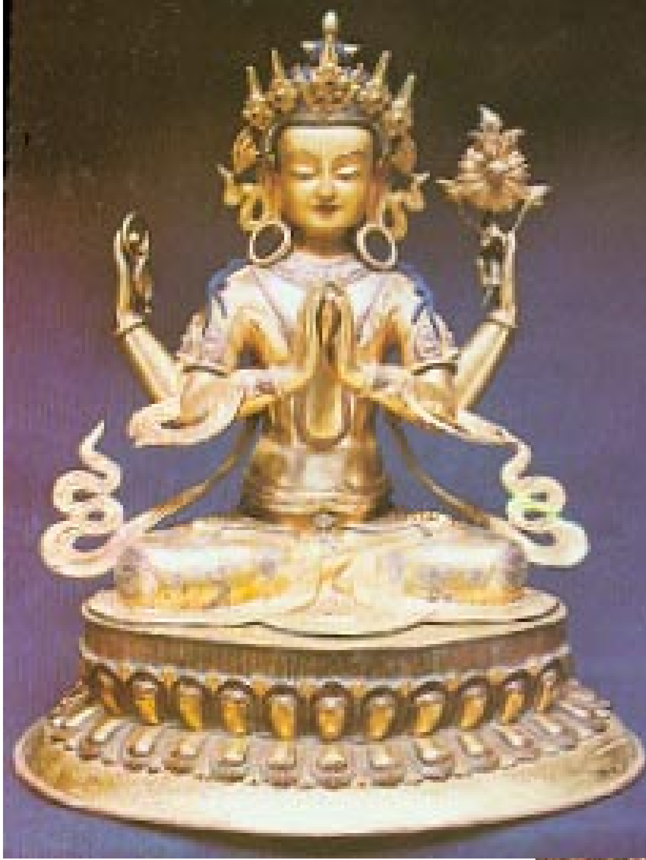
7.3 Six-syllabled or Sadakshary Lokeshvara

Six-syllabled Avalokiteshvara is widely used for devotional practice of Yidam or Istadevata. His six-syllabled mantra ***Om Mani Padme Hung*** has become so popular that it has been a household mantra for every buddhist in Mahayana tradition. It is said that the fully enlightened mind has three great qualities: Great compassion, Wisdom and the Skillful Means to benefit all sentient beings. The great compassion is the attitude that all the sentient beings be freed from every

form of suffering, pain and dissatisfaction. Such great compassion and altruistic attitude which strives toward complete enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings is here symbolized by this four-armed Avalokiteshvara.

The traditional author great Thangtong Gyalpo describes him thus:

> Upon a white lotus and moon seat, the syllable ***Hrih*** arises. The letter then transforms into four-armed Avalokiteshvara. He has a white, translucent body that radiates five coloured lights. He has a smiling expression and gazes upon us with compassionate eyes. He has four hands, the first two pressed together at his heart and the lower two holding a crystal rosary and a white lotus. He is adorned with silks and jewelled ornaments and wears an upper garment of an antilope skin. His crown is adorned with Amitabha. If we rely on this sadhana of Avalokiteshvara and recite mantra ***Om Mani Padme Hung*** with strong faith and devotion we will definitely achieve realizations of great compassion and supreme Buddhahood. It is said that as Avalokiteshvara benefits sentient beings with the help of six syllable mantra he is called Six-syllabled Lokeshvara. The importance and grandeur of this mantra is well explained in the Guna Karandavyuha sutra. About a half dozen images of Six-syllabled Lokeshvara are found in Patan alone in stone sculptures.



Six-syllabled
or
‹ Sadakshary
Lokeshvara
(bronze)



Harihariharihari
Vahan
Lokeshvara ›
(stone)
(Golden Temple,
Patan)

7.4 Harihariharivahan Lokeshvara

This is one of the most interesting sculptors/forms of Avalokiteshvara. It seems that this form of Avalokiteshvara is basically of Nepalese origin. According to Swayambhu Purana, when the great bodhisattva Manjushree drained the lake called Nagarhad (now Kathmandu valley) all the Nagarajas especially Takshaka were very angry. Bodhisattva Samantabhadra pacified them all except the Takshaka. He killed many people and animals. Due to this act of violence he was afflicted with leprosy. He repented his actions and began to pray for Arya Avalokiteshvara in order to eliminate his bad karma. Due to his strong devotion to Lord Avalokitesvara he was cured of his disease.

One day while he was leisurely sun basking in a nearby river, a hungry Garuda saw him there. He alighted down and tried to devour Takshaka. Since Takshaka was the king of Nagas, he had great strength. They began to engage in a ferocious battle. He soon began to drag Garuda into river and intended to kill him. Garuda, finding himself about to be killed, invoked his protector Vishnu who came there immediately to save him. As Vishnu was about to cut off the head of Takshaka with his Sudarsanacakra i.e. whirling disc, Takshaka, realizing his upcoming defeat, prayed for Avalokiteshvara for his protection. Avalokiteshvara arrived there instantly flying over his lion vehicle. Vishnu was ashamed to find Avalokiteshvara, Lord of compassion in front of him and instantly bowed

before him throwing away his Sudrashan Chakra and paid homage.

Thereafter Takshaka and Garuda too retreated from the battle and joined to the worship of Avalokiteshvara. After that Vishnu offered himself to Avalokiteshvara to be his vehicle. In the mean time, the lion also offered himself to be the vehicle of Garuda, in turn. Nagaraja Takshaka also offered to be the vehicle of the lion. Thus this composite image of Avalokiteshvara on Vishnu, and on Garuda, then on the lion, all then on Takshaka. The original image of this unique Lokeshvara is at Changu Narayan, a hill above Sodhani Tirtha, near Bhaktapur.

Harihariharivahan Lokeshvara's body is depicted white in colour. He has six arms. Out of his three right hands one hand displays the witness gesture, the second hand holds a rosary and the third right hand displaying bodhyanga mudra. The three left hands hold staff, Krishnajina and a vase. He is seated on the vehicle of Naga, lion, Garuda and Narayana. His images in bronze and stones can be seen at Swayambhu in Kathmandu, Kwabahal, and Okubahal in Patan.

7.5 Sristikanta Lokeshvara

Among the many forms of Avalokiteshvara Sristikanta Lokeshvara is the one derived from the text Gunakarandavyuha Sutra. This Sutra was basically composed in the 3rd or 4th century. This was the time Lord Maitreya transmitted the teachings of Buddha nature to Acarya Asanga (Circa 350 A.D.) The Sutra

says that when this Universe was empty except Prabhasvara, there were no physical elements like earth, water, air, and fire. Adi-Buddha appeared in the first place. He meditated on a samadhi called Lokasansarjana with a view to create the Universe. First of all he emanated Aryavalokiteshvara. He in turn meditated deeply on samadhi called Lokotbhava thereby creating moon from his right eye, sun from his left eye, then the system of day and night evolved.

He then created Mahadeva from his forehead, Brahma from his shoulders, Narayana from his heart, Sarasvati from his upper and lower teeth, Vayu deva from his mouth; Varuna Nagaraja from his abdomen, Mahalaxmi from his left knee, Agnideva from his navel, Kuvera from his right knee, the earth from his sole. In this way he created many other important devas, and assigned them characteristic duties for each. These created Devas gladly accepted their duties and promised to keep them for ever. They also promised to practise Bodhisattvacarya for the sake of all sentient beings. Avalokiteshvara told them that if they kept their promises and worked for the benefit of all sentient beings they would then attain Buddhahood in future.

We have already dealt with Dharmakaya or Adi-Buddha or Prabhasvara (in the Introduction) that Adi-Buddha never meant first Buddha. It must be known that Prabhasvara is rendered as Clear light. The nature of our mind is empty in essence yet it can cognize everything. This principle is constant throughout the three divisions of time. It is also known as pri-



Sriṣtikanta Lokeshvara ‹ (stone) (Golden Window, Durbar Square. Patan)



Rakta Aryavalokiteshvara (Bungadeo, › Patan)

mordially self-existing wakefulness or dharmakaya nature of our mind. This nature is inherented by all sentient beings — so they are all potential Buddhas. When one realizes that one's mind is empty and yet cognizant one realizes Buddhahood. When one's veil of obscurations are removed one's buddha nature is manifested simultaneously. To communicate this idea the sutra describes it in a theistic sense that there appeared first a Buddha when nothing was there. Although the Sutra illustrates in a theistic sense, the inner meaning of the sutra is to communicate this Buddhanature theme.

Iconographically, Sristikanata Lokeshvara is red in colour. He holds a lotus flower with his left hand and displays varada mudra with his right hand. He is generally depicted in a standing posture with a dozen important deities emanating. His image can be seen in the Golden Window of Patan Durbar Square, Patan.

7.6 Rakta Arya Avalokiteshvara

Rakta Aryavalokiteshvara is one of the many forms of Avalokiteshvara. According to a chronicle, Avalokiteshvara emanated himself as a son of Yaksha in Kamuni Kshetra in Assam. He was brought to Kathmandu with great effort by king Narendra Deva, Guru Bandhudatta and a farmer Lalita. In the seventh century Nepal there was a famine for twelve years. People suffered much due to drought. Following the suggestion of Acarya Bandhudutta the act of bringing a child who

was the emanation of Arya Avalokiteshvara was carried out successfully. Nepalese people called this deity as Bungadeo. Every year a chariot festival is celebrated with great pomp and splendour in Patan city. All the valley citizens observe this festival with gaiety and happiness.

This deity is generally red in colour. He has four arms. He holds an arrow and goad with his right hands and bow and noose with his left hands. He stands under the Asoka tree, which has blossomed into red flowers. A bronze image of Rakta Aryavalokiteshvara is installed on the central courtyard of Hiranyavarna Mahavihara, Patan. The image of this deity is very rare. Only the human manifestation in the form of Bungadeo is popular in Kathmandu valley.

7.7 Lokanath Lokeshvara

In common parlance all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas can be called Lokanath i.e Lord of the world but in a specific sense Lokanath is one of the forms of Avalokiteshvara. Nepalese textual sources describes him thus:

> He is white in colour. He sits in the Lalita attitude. In his matted hair the figure of Vajradharma exhibiting varadamudra in the right hand and holding lotus in his left hand appears. He is said to have originated from the seed syllable *Hrih*. He exhibits varadamudra with his right hand and holds a lotus in the left. In the Lokanath mandala, he is said to be surrounded

by Tara to his right and Hayagriva on the left. A host of eight bodhisattvas and others surrounds him. The image of this form of Lokeshvara is very rare. Both the Padmapani and Lokanatha hold the Lotus with their left hands and this creates confusion in identification.



Lokanath Lokeshvara

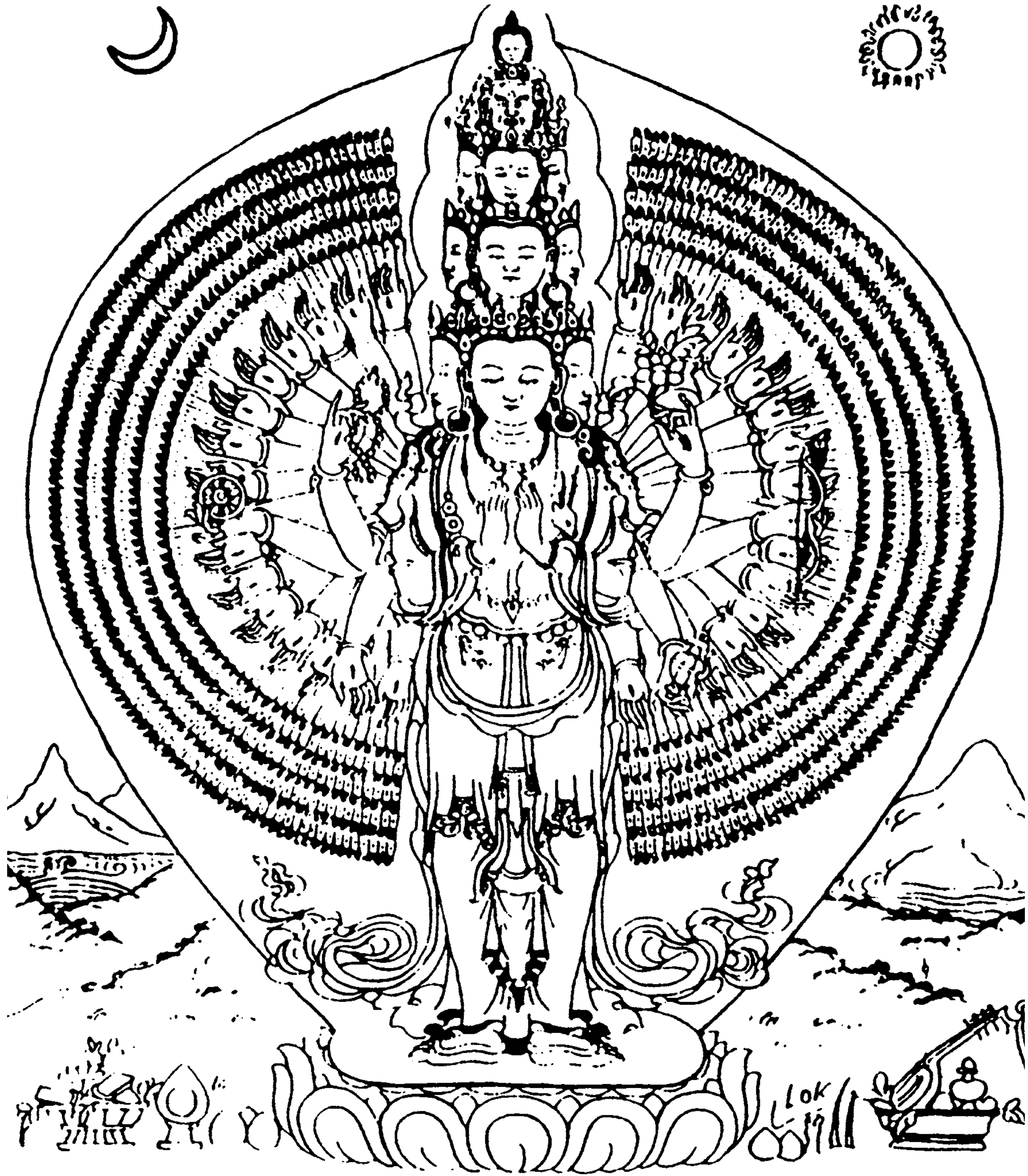
7.8 One Thousand-armed Lokeshvara or Sahasrabhuja Lokeshvara

This is one of the many forms of Avalokiteshvara comprising 108 as depicted in the Kanak Caitya Mahavihara of Kathmandu.

He manifests in many forms in order to help sentient beings. His 1,000-armed form is described as follows:

His body is white. He has 1,000 arms and one thousand eyes. However his original two hands and two eyes are not included. Out of 1,000 arms of Avalokiteshvara, 38 arms of this lokeshvara are depicted with various symbols or emblems which are given below:

Right Arms	Left Arms
1. Jewel skt. ***Ratna***	1. Svetamegha
2. Noose skt. ***pasa***	2. Kamandalu
3. Alms bowl skt. ***Pindapatra***	3. Padma
4. Sword skt. ***Khadga***	4. Khadga
5. Vajrai	5. Sankha
6. Suryakantmani	6. Kapala
7. Candrakantmani	7. Akshamala
8. Dhanu	8. Ghanta
9. A root shoot of willow	9. Vajra
10. Camara	10. Amkush
11. Kavaca	11. Danda
12. Kalasa	12. Nirmita Buddha
13. Parasu	13. Devalaya
14. Akshamala	14. Pustakapothi
15. Utpala	15. Cakra
16 Kamandalu	16. Buddha pratima
17. Surya	17. Phala
18. Pundarika	18. Padmakeshara
19. Dhanyamanjary	19. Ratna



Sahasrabhuja Lokeshvara (1,000-armed)

Sometimes he is depicted with emblems with eight arms only carrying rosary, disc, varada mudra and jewel with his right hands and lotus, bow, vase and clapping Ratna with his left hands. He wears antilope skin on his shoulders symbolizing compassionate nature. He wears all the bodhisattva ornaments

like earrings, and so on. He has eleven heads. The eleventh one being his spritual sire Buddha Amitabha. It is said that Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara made the commitment in front of Buddha Amitabha to intentionally manifest into the three realms of samsara in order to liberate all sentient beings from samsara and to be their supreme guide. He also vowed that if by chance his compassion and courageous mind of mercy for sentient beings were to decrease, then let his head and body just completely crack and fall into one thousand pieces. Receiving blessings from Buddha Amitabha, Avalokiteshvara went through universal manifestations into the three realms of samsara.

Thereby he went to Hell and emancipated them from both the hot and cold hells by teaching ***Om mani pad me hung.*** He in turn went to ghost realm, human, Asura and Deva realms to free the sentient beings from their respective suffering. He absolutely emptied the ocean of suffering. Following which he went back to Buddha Amitabha and declared that the liberation had been effected. Buddha Amitabha said to him, "you should look again, look back again and again into the world." And as he did, there he saw once again that sentient beings were in samsara and in sorrow, he became so disappointed when he saw the sight. Then his enlightened thought (Bodhicitta) decreased in the moment and he lost his courage. He became disappointed in the very presence of Buddha Amitabha.

He felt how could the time come to liberate all sentient beings for ever from this type of condition. And instantly when

his mind felt with sorrow, his body and head just cracked and fell apart into one thousand pieces, and then he fainted.

Avalokiteshvara thus fainted, and Buddha Amitabha said to him, "My son where has your courage, your mental strength gone?" He picked up all the pieces of his body and the head. At the same time he said, "this happened because of your prayer. You deserve the praise of all Buddhas since your prayer was efficacious. However, noble son! Don't worry." Thereby he blessed his broken heads into eleven faces and he sat upon those heads and his broken body into one thousand hands like one thousand petals of the lotus. Thereafter he said, "I bow to you because your thousand hands are the hands of the thousand universal emperors and those eyes in each of the palms of the hands are the eyes of one thousand Buddhas who will appear in this fortunate aeon. After that Avalokiteshvara appeared in many different forms in order to tame the suffering sentient beings and he successfully accomplished many events.

The image of 1,000 armed Avalokiteshvara in stone is rare in Kathmandu valley. The bronze images can be seen here and there. Basically a system of fasting ceremony called Nyune from Tibet came to Kathmandu too, through Tibetan Buddhists Masters. In this fasting ceremony the practice; or sadhana is usually devoted to this form of Avalokiteshvara.

Thousand armed Avalokiteshvara form of image can be found in China too. A giant image of 1,000 armed Avalokiteshvara (ht. 360cm) is installed in the Maitreya temple in Tainan. It was carved out of wood and has aesthetical value.

VIII. Manjushree & His Forms

8.1 Arapacana Manjushree

Manjushree embodies wisdom aspect of an enlightened mind. This is the ability to see into the true nature of reality of the persons and the phenomena. Manjushree has the ability to discriminate correct views of reality as it is. In order to benefit the sentient beings he too, manifests in different forms. In this form of Manjushree, he is single faced symbolizing his wisdom as non-dual. He holds the flaming sword in his right hand to symbolize cutting off the root of the delusion which is the cause of suffering, ignorance, and of self grasping. He holds the scriptural text entitled 'Perfection of wisdom' which cuts off all delusions. He sits in the Vajraparyanka attitude. He is always accompanied by four companions, with few exceptions.

He is invoked especially for increasing intelligence by reciting his mantra viz: ***Om A Ra Pa Ca Na Dhih*** many times.

This form of Manjushree has a special relationship with Kathmandu valley because it was he who drained the water of Kathmandu valley to make it habitable land. According to Swayambhu legend it is said that he came to Kathmandu valley with his consorts Kesini and Upakesini. His two companions are said to be Jalinikumar and Chandraprabha Kumar who were bodhisattvas. As the water receded, the sacred hill of Swayambhu Stupa appeared. This was the contribution of great bodhisattva Manjushree Arapacana.



Arpacana Manjushree

8.2 Manjughosha

This form of Manjushree as described in Sadhanamala, is golden yellow in colour and rides on a lion. He is decked in all sorts of bodhisattva ornaments and his hands exhibit dharmacakra mudra. He displays an utpala flower in his left hand and bears an image of Akshobhya on his crown. He is invoked by his popular mantra ***Om vagisvara Muh***.

Concerning his activities in Nepal a legend is befitting to cite here. There was an Upasaka called Buddhapala in the city of Pancala. He was very learned and had many disciples who learnt many orthodox sciences under him. Unfortunately his only son called Manjugarta had not been educated. He was too dull to learn most of the sciences Buddhapala taught to his disciples. So he decided to send his son to Manjushree Caitya near Swayambhu hill to receive blessings from Manjushree. So he sent his son there along with some of his disciples with the necessary instructions. On his way to Manjushree Caitya he came to a farm where sugar cane was cultivated. Young Manjugarta was enchanted with the place. He wanted to stay there for ever.

Instead of reciting ***Om Na Mo Vagisvaraya*** at the site of Manjushree Caitya he was busy testing and chewing succulent sugarcane. His friends suggested him if he was not interested to visit Manjushree he could recite his mantra from the same place where he was enjoying sugarcane. Accepting their proposal Manjugarta and his friends started reciting ***Om na mo vagisvaraya*** with devotion.



Manjughosha

Manjughosa instantly appeared in the sugarcane field with his divine form as we have described above. Even when Manjughosa appeared there this young Manjugarta was not interested to pay homage to him but through his friends suggestion he paid homage to Manjughosa. Later, Manjughosa blessed Manjugarta and predicted that he would be a master of all orthodox sciences. His ignorance was eliminated instantaneously with mere touch. Young Manjugarta later composed a hymn of praise to Manjughosa entitled 'Manjuvajra Strotram' which is still sung by the Nepalese devotees till today.

8.3 Vagisvara Manjushree or Dharmadhatu Vagisvara

Dharmadhatu Vagishvara when depicted in sculptures is eight armed, four faced, and reddish-white in colour. His right face is red, left face is yellowish-red and back face is lotus red in colour. He holds the bow and the arrow, the noose and goad, scripture and Khadga and bell and the vajra in the respective pair of hands. He sits on moon disc on a double lotus in lalita attitude. He wears all the bodhisattva ornaments and garments and bears on his crown an image of Amitabha.

Another form of Vagisvara Manjushree is single faced. He holds sword with his right hand and jewel in his left hand. He resides in the heart of Buddha Ratna Sambhava.



Dharmadhatu Vagisvara

Different forms of Manjushree images in stone and bronze are scattered in various places. More than six dozen images in stone are found in Patan city alone thus deserving the name Manjupattan.

8.4 Manjuvajra

Manjushree manifested in many different forms and names in order to deliver sentient beings from their ignorance. According to Swayambhu Purana he manifested himself in a human being as Manjuvajra Acarya and performed his bodhisattva deeds in the land of Swayambhu, self born i.e the primordial Buddha.

His human manifestation of Manjushree is deified in tantric lore as seated on the back of a lion. He is of beautiful golden colour resembling Buddha Vairocana. His three faces have yellow, blue and white colour. He is six armed. In his right hands he is holdingthe sword, varada mudra and the arrow and his left hands are holding scripture, blue lotus i.e Utpal flower and the bow.

8.5 Manjushree Namasangiti

Manjushree Namasangiti is one of the important manifestations of Manjushree, the embodiment of wisdom of all the Buddhas. It is said that he was already enlightened countless



Manju Vajra (stone) ‹ (Swayambhu Museum)



Namasangiti Manjushree (bronze) › (Golden Temple, Patan)

aeons ago. During Shakyamuni's time he appeared himself as one of his eight chief bodhisattva disciples. Countless Buddhas of ten direction have been his disciples. Therefore he was called Adi-Buddha Manjushree. Namasangiti text has more than eight hundred words of deep spiritual significance describing this deity.

In the usual form, Namasangiti had one head and twelve arms. He is seated with dhyanamudra. He wears all the bodhisattva ornaments typical of Sambhogakaya aspects. He has Ushnisa in his head and wears a crown. His uppermost arms above his head are in the uttarabodhi mudra i.e two hands folded to form a prostration attitude. His other two hands at the breast level are in dharmacakra or (abhaya mudra?). Two other hands are in tarpana mudra i.e about to offer water from the alms bowl. Two hands hold an alms bowl kept in the lap. Two hands at the shoulder level hold sword and scripture on a lotus and the other two hands hold bow and arrow. This form of Namasangiti is very popular in Kathmandu valley.



IX. Tara & Her Forms

9.1 Green Tara

Tara represents the entire enlightened activities of all Buddhas and hence she is called the mother of the Buddhas of three times. It is said in a sutra that Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva saved and ferried countless suffering beings over from the sea of birth and death. It happened one day when Avalokiteshvara looked at the misery of the world. He shed tears from his eyes out of great compassion. The tears turned into a lotus flower from which appeared a white and green Tara who said to him, "Please don't be sad. We'll assist you in liberating living beings, although they are countless in number, the power of our vow is also immeasurable".

Since then they had been liberating countless numbers of living beings daily. The name of Tara was thus known to all buddhas in ten directions.

There are 21 forms of Tara (the Saviouress). In reality they are all the transformed bodies of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of compassion.

Green Tara appears as young beautiful maiden. Her body is green in colour. She has one face and two arms, she wears a crown bedecked with five buddha images. She wears all kinds of bodhisattva ornaments studded with jewels and celestial garments of varied colour. She sits on a lotus throne in Lalita attitude in half lotus posture. Her left hand shows



‹ *Green Tara (bronze)*



White Tara › *(bronze)*

the gesture of refuge vows and right hand the varada mudra because she is quick to answer the petitions of those who seek her aid. Tara is known as the great liberator from eight kinds of danger or fears. The cultivation of Tara sadhana will eliminate all demoniac and karmic obstacles, eradicate disaster and lengthen one's life span.

9.2 White Tara

The origin of White Tara is the same as mentioned earlier about Green Tara. She appeared out of tear drops of Avalokiteshvara when he saw that the beings in Samsara are still full of misery in spite of his efforts to liberate them. This form of Tara is described in the meditational texts as follows:

> White Tara is seated in full Vajra posture and her left hand which is poised at the heart holds the stem of a lotus that opens into a blossom beside her left shoulder. Her right hand is in the Varada mudra symbolizing supreme generosity. She is seated upright on a moon disc. She is wearing all sorts of precious ornaments and looks like a beautiful maiden of sixteen years of age. An Amitablia Buddha image sits upon the head as a crown.
>
> The practice of white Tara is basically performed in order to prolong life as well as for healing purposes. It is said that because Arya Tara is the collective manifestation of the enlightened activity of all Buddhas, her sadhana is easily accomplished. The recitation of

her Mantra merely a hundred thousand times with the motivation of Bodhicitta will cause avertion of hindrances.

9.3 Bhrikuti Tara

The concept of Bhrikuti Tara is noted in the earliest text of Arya Manjusrcemulakalpa. She appears along with Arya Tara and a host of other feminine divinities called Vidyarajnis in Chapter 2 named Mandalavidhana Parivarta of that sutra. Bhrikuti is also mentioned in Hevajra tantra (2nd chapter). She is generally depicted as a companion deity of some forms of Avalokiteshvara viz. Khasarpana, Padmanarteshvara, Amoghpasa, etc. Bhrikuti appears in different forms. When she appears in blue colour, she is depicted as three headed and a six armed form. When yellow she is single faced three eyed and four armed and with frowning eyebrows. Her four hands hold a rosary, a trident, a Kalasa and display varada mudra.

Taranatha in his history of Buddhism in India describes a visit of an upasaka Santivarman from Pundravardhana to the top of the Potala hill, the abode of Avalokiteshvara. It is said that Santivarman once prayed to Bhrikuti to cross a sea and there appeared a girl with a raft and who took him across.

While climbing Potala hill, an upasaka saw an image of Bhrikuti on the way up the hill. It is also said that Bhrikuti Tara manifested herself as a Nepalese princess in seventh century, who was married to the Tibetan king, Srong btsan sGampo

(617–650 A.D.). Bhrikuti Devi was instrumental in diffusing Buddhism in Tibet. She brought the artistic images of Arya Tara, Avalokiteshvara and Akshobhya Buddha into Tibet.

9.4 Vasudhara

Vasudhara is one of the important and popular feminine deities in Nepalese Buddhist society. Vasudhara Vrata, which is performed to honour this deity for two consecutive days once a year, is very popular event among Nepalese Buddhists. She is believed to be the bestower of wealth and prosperity similar to Laxmi Devi in Hinduism. It is said that through the practice of Vasudhara Vrata devotees accumulate seven kinds of prosperity i.e. wealth, quality, offspring, long life, happiness, praise and wisdom. She is described in the meditational texts as follows:

> She has three faces and six arms. She is seated in Lalita attitude. Her right foot is rested on a conch placed over a vase with a lotus. Her three right hands hold a rosary, jewels, displaying of varada mudra and left three hands hold a vase, dhanyam anjary (rice stalk) and a scripture. She wears all the precious ornaments and silk garments. She appears as a young girl of sixteen years of age. She is golden yellow in colour. She has an image of Buddha Ratna Sambhava on her crown.
>
> The reddish white, yellow and dark red faces of the deity symbolize three eras of the Universe i.e. creation,

existence and destruction. Her Varada mudra symbolizes that she bestows seven kinds of prosperity to all sentient beings especially the multiplicity of offspring. The jewel symbolizes that one's wishes are fulfilled, the rosary symbolizes that through repeated investigation of our natural state or reality one's wisdom and qualities will be developed. The auspicious vase symbolizes that she confers the initiation on devotees, who thus attain high status or increase of praise or fame. The second left hand holding dhanyamanjary symbolizes that through the power of food grains one's life is sustained or life span increased. The third left hand holding scripture symbolizes that one gains insight of emptiness or increase in wisdom.

9.5 Kurukulla

There are many forms of the deity Kurukulla. But the most important form is called Tarodbava Kurukulla. She is red in colour with red garments, red ornaments and seated on a red lotus. She has four arms. Two left hands show her charging a flowery arrow on a flowery bow ready to strike and other two hands hold a noose and a goad. She appears as beautiful maiden in a dancing posture and displays lovely sentiments. The deity Kurukulla is said to confer success on devotees particularly in the tantric ritual of subjugating, enchanting men, women, ministers and the kings.



Vasudhara
‹ *(stone)*
(Swayambhu)



Kurukulla
(bronze) ›

X. Prajnas Of Five Buddhas (Panca Buddhas)

The earliest tantra dealing with the Prajnas of Five Tathagatas is the Guhyasamaja. According to Benoytosh Bhattacharya this tantra dates back as old as the third century A.D. Another treatise which deals with these Buddha Prajnas, is Pancakara of Advayavajra (11th century A.D.). A recent study of Prof. Mallar Ghosh has thrown a great light on the historical development of the usage of these deities. Modern scholars often use the term Buddha Sakti for these five deities viz. Locana, Mamaki, Pandara, Tara and Vajradhatveshvary. But the use of the term sakti does not conform with the Buddhist conception. The term Sakti, which is used to symbolize energy, action or power, is associated only with some forms of Hindu deities. In Buddhist tantras these deities symbolize the essence or prajnarupa or svabhava of five Buddhas. It is strange to note that not a single sadhana is devoted to these live Prajnas. They appear only in Yab-yum position and they are not given any active function.

The images of these deities are very rare. However a fine specimen of these five Prajnas can be found in the Swayambhu Caitya with the exception of Vajradhatveshvary.

10.1 Locana

In the Pancakara of Advayavajra Samgraha she is said to be originated from the seed syllable *Lom*, white in complexion. She belongs to Tathagata kula. Her recognition symbol is a



Locana

wheel. She is said to be Prajna of Vairocana. She is said to be similar in nature as Lord Vairocana. She is seated in Lalita asana and displays Varadamudra with her right hand. Her left palm is on the chest. From both the palms rise the stalks of lotus, supporting a Vajra.

In Hevajra Tantra and its commentary it is said that Locana, Mamaki, Pandara and Tara represent the four elements i.e. earth, water, fire and air. She has many forms, some peaceful and some wrathful. She can be found in two armed, six armed and eight armed as described in various mandalas. Her images are very rare. A magnificent image of Locana can be found in the Swayambhu Stupa. In the Gurumandala rite of Nepalese Buddhists Vajracharyas make offerings to the five Buddhas and their Prajnas.

The special characteristic of this deity is that those devotees engrossed in delusion acquire all pervasive wisdom through the sadhana of Buddha Vairocana and Locana. It is said that the essence of delusion is also dharmakaya which is free from thought constructs. So through the practice, delusion is transmuted into wisdom of all pervasive awareness. (skt. *Suvisuddha dharmadhatu jnana*).

10.2 Mamaki

Mamaki is another important deity who is said to be originated from seed syllable, *Mam*. She is blue in colour. She is the embodiment of the water element. She belongs to vajra



‹ *Mamaki*



Pandara ›

family and is the nature of hatred. Her recognition symbol is Vajra. She is the consort or Prajna of Buddha Akshobhya. Her another name is Dvesarati.

She resides in the south west corner. She too has many forms. She can be found in two armed, six armed, eight armed and twelve armed forms. In two armed form she is depicted holding a vajra with her right and her left hand resting on her thigh. In another case she is seen displaying varada mudra with her right hand and the stalk of an utpala with her left.

According to Tantric Buddhist symbolism of Newar Buddhist tradition there is a special ritual worship of Mamaki in the form of triad ritual objects (Newari: Anti, Khayakori and Thapin). The Newari word Anti is a special jar used for keeping fermented wine, Khayakori for Yoghurt and Thapin for keeping fermented beer.

10.3 Pandara

Pandara is said to be the Prajna of Amitabha Buddha. She is the same in essence with Buddha Amitabha. She is the embodiment of the fire element and is thus red in colour. She is also the embodiment of passion or lust; when transmuted it becomes wisdom of discriminating awareness.

In Vajrayana Buddhism unlike in lower vehicle it uses lust as a path to enlightenment. Whereas in lower vehicle i.e. Shravaka vehicle one refrains being lustful and practices renunciation of all sorts of worldy desires and physical pleasures.

In Pancakara of Advayavajra Samgraha she is said to be originated from the seed syllable *Pam*. She is called Ragarati. Her recognition symbol is the lotus held in one of her hands. The guru mandala rite of Nepalese Buddhists make frequent mention of five Buddhas and their Prajnas and Nepalese Vajracharyas worship them frequently.

10.4 Tara

Tara is said to be the Prajna of Buddha Amoghsiddhi. She is the embodiment of the air element and is thus green in colour. She is also called Irsyarati i.e. the nature of jealosy. When the defilement jealosy is transmuted it becomes all accomplishing wisdom (skt. *Krityanusthan Jnana*).

In Advayavajra Samgraha, she is said to be originated from the seed syllable *Tam* of golden green colour. Her recognition symbol is a green night lotus (skt. *Utpala*). She belongs to Karma family. She represents the enlightened activity of all Buddhas of three times. She too has many forms i.e. two armed, six armed and eight armed.

10.5 Vajradhatveshvari

She is said to be the consort of Buddha Ratna Sambhava. She is the same in essence as Buddha Ratna Sambhava. She is the embodiment of emptiness or the space element. She is yellow in colour. She is surrounded by the four Prajnas i.e. Locana, Mamaki, Pandara and Tara.



Tara

Vajradhatveshvari as described in the Pancakara of Advayavajra Samgraha resembles Tathagata Vajrasattva. She has various forms: two armed, six armed and eight armed. Her two arm form is described as follows:

> She is seated in Lalita asana. In her right hand she displays varada mudra with the stalk of a lotus supporting a jewel and in her left hand she displays a vitarka mudra with the stalk of a lulus supporting a jewel.

Because of her role as the embodiment of Tathata or Prajnaparamita she is also called Nairatma, Vajravarahi and Jnanadakini. In Sadhanamala she is identified with six headed and twelve armed Marici whose lord is Vairocana.



Vajradhatveshvari ›

XI. Deities of Anuttara Yoga Tantras

11.1 Kalacakra

Kalacakra is the deity of Highest Yoga Tantra class. Its initiation is given only to selected disciples who are qualified and have a foundation experience of renunciation, Bodhicitta and correct view of Emptiness. In Nepalese tradition too, the initiation of Kalacakra is performed very often by learned Vajracharya priests. Receiving empowerment of this deity is a rare event these days.

It is said that one year after Shakyamuni Buddha attained Enlightenment, he was requested by King Candrabhadra of Shambhala to teach the Kalacakra Tantra. The Buddha then manifested himself in the form of Kalacakra meditational deity in South India and gave the full teachings and initiation of his tantra.

Kalacakra teaching was then transmitted through a lineage of seven kings and 25 propagators. The Kalacakra initiation sessions have been performed several times by His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama at the present time also. Those who have received this initiation may use this meditational deity for Yidam practice.

Kalacakra has four faces, twenty four arms and two legs. His front face is blue with bare fangs, right face is red, left white and rear yellow each with three eyes. His blue face expresses wrathfulness. The deity is adorned with many jewel



Kalacakra & his consort

ornaments, such as the earrings, the necklace, the crown, the bangles and anklets and so on. He is dressed in a tiger skin.

Among his 24 arms, 12 arms are on either side. The first four arms black, the middle red, and the last four arms are white. The first of the black arms embraces the consort and holds a vajra in the hand, the second a sword, the third a trident, and the fourth a cleaver. The first of the right red hands holds an arrow, the second a long handled vajra hook, the third a damaru, and the fourth a hammer. Again, the first of the right white hands holds a wheel, the second a sword, the third a stick, the fourth an axe. The first of the left black hands holds a bell, the second a shield, the third a khatvang, the fourth the kapala i.e. skull cup. The first of the left right hands holds a bow, the second a lasso, the third a precious jewel, and the fourth a white lotus. The first of the left white hands holds a white conch, the second a mirror, the third an iron chain, and the fourth the head of the deity Brahma, held by the hair.

The Kalacakra has only two legs. The right one is red and left one is white symbolizing the right energy channels containing blood and left energy channels containing white Bodhicitta, The consort of Kalacakra is called Visvamati. She is yellow in colour and has four faces each with three eyes. The other three faces are white, black and red. She has eight arms, four each on the either side. The first right hand embraces Kalacakra, the second a vajra hook, the third a damaru, and the fourth a rosary. The first of her left hands embraces

Kalacakra and holds a kapala filled with blood, the second hand holds a lasso, the third a lotus, the fourth a precious jewel. The consort wears a crown and is adorned with five types of ornaments. She is in union with the deity Kalacakra.

11.2 Hayagriva

Hayagriva is one of the emanations of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. He is also regarded as Yidam or Istadevata. He has many forms often with three faces, six arms and four legs and sometimes with huge wings. He can be recognized by a small horse head surmounted on the top of his main terrific head. The horse head neighs very loudly and it is noted that the sound is said to pierce all the false appearance of inherent existence or substantial reality.

The Hayagriva's terrific appearance is directed towards ego grasping and outer obstructions. His wrathfulness is said to be fierce compassion directed towards a self-cherishing attitude.

According to Sadhanamala, Hayagriva is red in colour. He is awesome and terrible in appearance with bare fangs. He has three eyes and brown beard. He wears a garland of skulls with teeth and lips. He is crowned with his Jata and a figure of Amitabha. His second face is that of a horse, which is blue in colour and neighs continuously. He tramples on the top of the world. He wears the snake ornaments. He is short and dwarfish and is clad in tiger skin. He threatens all the deities and asuras and holds the Vajra and staff in his two hands.



‹ Hayagriva (bronze)



Cakrasamvara ›

11.3 Yogambara

Yogambara is one of the most popular Yidam deities of Nepalese Buddhists. He sits on Ardhaparyanka on the moon on a double lotus placed on a lion. He is blue in colour and is three faced. His principal face is blue, the right white and the left red. He is six armed, and carries the vajra and bell with his two principal hands. He embraces his prajna Jnandakini who is also blue in colour and is bedecked with snake ornaments. In the remaining two hands he holds the breast and the arrow and in the two hands in the left he holds the lotus bowl and bow.

According to the legend, it is said that the deity Yogambara and consort Jnanadakini manifested themselves in the form of Yaksha and Yakshani in Kamarupa in Assam and gave birth to their son Lord Karunamaya whose chariot festival is continuing even today in Patan city. It is said that during the bathing ceremony of Karunamaya, Jnanadakini his mother in Yaksha form, used to come to Lagankhel in Patan and observe the ceremony residing on a tree.

11.4 Cakrasamvara

Cakrasamvara is the deity of Highest Yoga Tantra. He is one of the most popular forms of Yidam deity among Nepalese Buddhists. Almost all the Shakyas and the Vajracharyas of Patan and Kathmandu regard Cakrasamvara as their tutelary

deity or Yidam deity. Nepalese Buddhist Vajracharyas have the age old tradition of practice of Cakrasamvara, a highly developed technique of contemplation to realize Clear light and emptiness aspect of the mind. A special tantra called Cakrasamvaramula tantra is dedicated to this Yidam deity. He has many forms. One of the popular form is described below:

Cakrasamvara in this form is deep blue in colour. He has four faces. The front face is blue-black, right face is white, back face is yellow, his left face is red. He is in ecstatic union with his consort Vajravarahi, red in colour. His front hands embrace his consorts with vajra and bell. His next right hands hold a damaru, a kartri, a trident and an axe. His next left hand holds a Khatvanga staff, a severed head of Brahma, a kapala and a lasso. With his back two hands he is lifting freshly flayed skin of an elephant. He wears a crown of skulls and a garland of fifty freshly severed heads and skulls. He also wears a tiger skin loin cloth. His front face with three eyes gazes at his consort.

His consort Vajravarahi is beautiful and bright red in colour. Her hair is black. She wears bracelets and anklets as well as ornaments in her girdle. Her right arm is thrown upward holding a Kartri and her left arms circled tightly around Samvara's neck with her face posed upwards. Under her feet are the Samvara's own emanations viz. red, four-armed Kalaratri and blue four-armed Bhairava.

Both the deities Samvara and Vajravarahi are Buddhas by their own right. Their union symbolizes that wisdom and

compassion are indivisible in the enlightened state. The twelve arms of Samvara symbolize twelve links of dependent origination. His garland of fresh severed heads symbolize his victory over ego grasping and self cherishing attitudes.

11.5 Hevajra

Hevajra is also one of the popular Yidam deity of Nepalese Buddhism belonging to Highest Yoga Tantra. In Hevajra Tantra, Hevajra is defined as thus:

He symbolizes Great compassion and Vajra symbolizes Wisdom (prajna). Within the composite name of Hevajra the essence of wisdom and compassion is contained in its entirety. In the Hevajra Tantra his form is described thus:

He is dark blue with a radiant aura. He has red eyes and yellow hair coiled and knotted at the top of his head. He is adorned with Pancamudra i.e. the circlet, the earrings, the necklace, the wrist, bracelets and the girdle. These five ornaments symbolize the purified aspects of five delusions. He appears wrathful and wears a tiger skin. He holds a skull in his left hand and a khatvanga rests in the crook of his left shoulder. He holds a black vajra in his right hand. He originates from the seed syllable *Hum*.

In his four arms form, he holds a human skull filled with the blood of the devas and asuras with his left hand and a vajra in his right hand. His remaining two hands embrace his consort Vajravarahi.

In his six-armed form, he has three faces red, blue and white. His six arms symbolize the six perfections. He holds a vajra and a knife with his two right hands and a trident and a bell in his two left hands. The remaining two hands embrace his consort Vajrasrinkhala holding a kartri and a kapala. He tramples a corpse which represents the three realms.

It is said that the practice of Hevajra and his consort is not to be disclosed to the others who have not received the empowerment. If the sadhaka does not conceal the practice it causes misfortune from snakes, fire, thieves, elementals and earth spirits.

Hevajra & his consort (bronze) ›



XII. Dakinis

12.1 Vajrayogini

Vajrayogini is a class of deities called Dakini in Highest Yoga Tantra. She is also called Naro-Dakini. She is a celestial female Buddha form who mainfested herself in an initiatory vision to the great Pandit Mahasiddha Naropa (956–1040). She is also called Sarva buddha dakini. Dakinis can be human, or non-human who can traverse through air. She possess supernatural wisdom and power and can assist the practitioner of Vajrayana in eliminating obstacles and obstruction to their practice. She can even confer great siddhi of liberation and omniscience.



Vajra-‹ yogini (bronze)

She holds a Kartri in her right hand and a skull bowl in her left. She carries a garland of severed heads and tramples upon her own emanations Bhairaba and Kalaratri beneath her feet. She holds a Khatvanga at the crook of her elbow parallel to her body position. She is almost naked but wears various ornaments.

In Kathmandu valley several temples dedicated to Vajrayogini are found. They are power centers of Nepalese Vajrayana tradition. She is said to be the onsort of Heruka Cakrasamvara.

12.2 Vajravarahi

Vajravarahi is another dakini associated with Heruka Cakrasamvara. Her status is not different from Vajrayogini. She is said to be the consort or the Prajna of Herukacakrasamvara. She is always depicted nude.

She is red in colour and stands on a reclining body of Bhairaba in dancing posture. She holds a Kartri in her right Hand on level of head and holds a kapala filled with blood in her left. She carries a khatvanga staff surmounted by three skulls. She wears a garland of fifty severed heads and various gold ornaments.

A special shrine is dedicated to Vajravarahi in Patan. For the practice of Sadhana of Vajravarahi an initiation (skt. ***diksha***) is required. One of the peculiar feature of this deity is that she has an excrescence near the right ear, which resembles the face of a sow hence her name Vajravarahi. Her worship is very popular in Nepal. There are numerous Caryagita dedicated to her.



Vajravarahi (silver)

XIII. Five Protectress Deities: Pancaraksha Devi

Out of so many female divinities five protectress deities popularly called Pancaraksha are the most popular deities in the Nepalese pantheon. These deities are not so common in the Tibetan tradition. The order of these five deities is given as follows: Mahapratisara, Mahasahasra pramardani, Mahamayuri, Mahasitavati, and Mahamantranusarini. The characteristic feature of each deity is that Mahapratisara protects against sin, illness and other dangers. Mahasahasra pramardani protects against evil spirits. Mahamayuri protects against the venomous snakes and cobras, wild animals and poisonous insects. And Mahamantranusarini protects against illness.



Mahapratisara

13.1 Mahapratisara

Mahapratisara has four heads and eight arms. She is white in colour and her heads are successively yellow, white, red and green. She is seated on a lotus throne in vajraparyanka posture. She wears the diadem. In her right hands she holds a vajra, an arrow, a sword and in her left hands holds a trident, a bow and an axe while her two principal hands hold a wheel and a garment.

The recitation and sadhana of this protectress deity confer great benefit and protection. One such example befitting to this context is described in the first chapter of the Pancaraksha sutra. It is said that one who holds the dharani of Mahapratisara will be protected from all forms of illness, eliminate the past non-virtuous karma, protect from all sorts of dangers. They take rebirth in higher realms. Their body becomes a vajra body not affected by fire, weapons and others.

In Bhadrakalpavadana it is said that Buddha Shakyamuni renounced his palace life before the birth of his son Rahula. He touched his wife Yasodhara's navel with his thumb finger of right foot and made a great vow that she be protected from great dangers which were to come to her in the future. After his great renunciation Yashodhara bore his child for six years inside her womb. Before the delivery of the child Rahula she was put to many hazardous trials and tribulations by his cousin Devadutta. But in all cases Yashodhara came out unhurt due to the miraculous power of Mahapratisara Devi. Nepalese Buddhists thus wear amulets for their protection

against various sorts of unseen dangers. These amulets contain the dharani of Mahapratisara Devi.

13.2 Mahasahasra Pramardani

Mahasahasra Pramardani has four heads and is awesome in appearance. The heads are successively white, blue, red and yellow. The deity wears a crown of human skulls and has tiger skin around her waist. The hair is dishevelled. She has eight arms. Her four right hands exhibit varadamudra, a sword, an arrow and a goad while her left hands hold a lotus, noose, bow and axe. She is seated in Lalitasana. She also wears a garland of severed human heads. She tramples upon a human corpse and is seated on a lotus throne. In Nispannayogavali she is described as having ten arms.

The characteristic feature of this protectress deity is that it protects us from evil and harmful spirits. It once happened that in the city of Vaishali a great disaster occured, lightning flashed violently, the earth trembled, many people suffered due to accidental diseases, deaths and other disastrous events. Lord Buddha through his Buddha eye saw many evil spirits giving troubles to people in the area by various means. Upon the request of four great kings the Buddha delivered the dharani of Arya Sahasrapramardani at Gridhkuta hill near Rajgir to pacify the evils caused by evil spirits. It is said that when the Buddha uttered the dharani of this deity hundreds of thousands of evil spirits ran away out of fear. For the benefit of



Mahasahasra ‹ Pramardani



Mahamayuri ›

the people of Vaishali the Buddha decided to enter their city. While entering into their city the people welcomed him with their best possible means. Then the Buddha out of compassion for all sentient beings taught the dharma which is auspicious in the beginning, in the middle and at the end. Many devas promised to protect the people who hold this dharani.

13.3 Mahamayuri

Mahamayuri has three heads. She is green in colour and her three faces are green, white and blue in colour. She is eight armed. One of her four right hands displays varadamudra while the other three hands hold a sword, vajra and jewel. In her four left hands she holds pindapatra, a jar showering jewels, a bell and a flower. She is seated on a lotus throne. She wears all the ornaments and celestial garments peculiar to a Bodhisattva.

According to the Mahamayuri sutra of Pancaraksha, there was a bhiksu called venerable Svati. He was newly ordained in the Buddhist community of monks. He was unfortunately bitten by a poisonous snake and fainted. On seeing his condition venerable Ananda reported this incident to Buddha Shakyamuni. Lord Buddha, out of compassion for the newly ordained monk and the future ones, disclosed a dharani which was capable of eliminating poisonous harm and malignant diseases. This was the dharani of Arya Mahamayuri.

There is another story about this deity. There was a golden King peacock in the Himalayan mountain who used

to recite Mahamayuri dharani with great devotion. It so happened one day that this king went along with his family to travel in the mountain forgetting to recite the dharani that day. He was caught by hunters. Thinking of his forgetfulness of the dharani he immediately began to recite and was able to free himself. The Buddha told Ananda that the peacock king called Suvarnavabhasa (i.e. golden coloured one) was none other than Buddha Shakyamuni himself. Thus this dharani is believed to be efficacious in all cases of dangers as well as for relieving poisonous harms.

13.4 Mahasitavati

According to Sadhanamala she is six armed and has three faces. She is green in colour. In her right hands she holds a lotus with the gesture of fearlessness, the arrow, the sword and in her left hands she holds a jewel banner, a bow and a lasso or a noose. She is seated in the ardhaparyanka posture and wears a crown. She wears all the ornaments of a bodisattva and sits on a lotus throne.

The characteristic feature of this deity is that she protects the beings from the evil effects of the planets, wild animals and poisonous insects.

According to the Mahasitavati Sutra, at one time Lord Buddha was dwelling at the cemetery of Sitavan in Rajagriha. At that time Venerable Rahula was troubled by many evil beings. Then Rahula went to see Lord Buddha and reported

this incident with tears in his eyes. The Buddha then suggested to him to recite the dharani of Arya Sitavati for protection from all sorts of harmful influences from the evil deities, planets, yakshas, snakes, non-human beings, and others. It is said that the recitation of this dharani relieves all disasters and is protected by all powerful four great divine kings.



Mahasitavati

13.5 Mahamantranusarini

Mahamantranusarini has three heads. She is green in colour. The heads are successively white, green and red. She has ten arms. With her two right hands she displays varada mudra and abhaya mudra while the other hands hold an arrow and a vajra. Two principal hands display vitarka mudra and the other two hands hold alms bowl. In her left hands she holds a bow, a jewel, a vase and a lasso. She wears a crown and is seated on a lotus throne. She wears all sorts of bodhisattva ornaments and garments appropriate for the Sambhogakaya aspect.

The characteristic feature of this deity is that she protects from illness of all types. The recitation of this dharani brings auspiciousness (skt. ***Svasti***) to our family, society, country and the whole world. It drives away all the evil forces of non-human beings, asuras, ghosts, yakshas and brings peace and happiness through the power of truth contained in the Buddha's teachings.

According to the Mahamantranusarini sutra, Lord Buddha disclosed this dharani to Venerable Ananda in the city of Rajagriha. Lord Buddha instructed Ananda to recite this dharani to the people of Vaisali where they were having disastrous events. Later the Buddha himself visited the city of Vaisali and uttered the dharani of Mahamantranusarini thereby pacifying all the calamities. Nepalese Buddhists recite this dharani sutra of auspiciousness during the marriage ceremony, ordination and other auspicious occasions or ceremonies.



Mahamantranusarini

XIV. Ten Wrathful Deities of Direction

In Vajrayana Buddhism the deities are classified as peaceful and wrathful. The wrathfulness is indicated toward ego-grasping which is root obstruction to liberation. So the function of these deities is to remove or eliminate all sorts of obstacles or obstruction for the protection of dharma. These wrathful deities have multiple heads, arms, varying colours, forms, headdresses, instruments and the other things. It is believed that the four cardinal directions, four corners and the top and bottom quarters numbering ten has each one deity who guards and protects. The origin of these ten deities of direction is described in the first chapter of the Guhyasamaja Tantra.

In most of the tantric practices of Nepalese Vajrayana Buddhism, the offering and the worship are made to these deities with special rites performed mostly in night times. One such instance is the rite of Initiation of Cakrasamvara in its fourteen aspects. Here Vajracharyas perform the worship of these wrathful deities at the cemetery to clear away the obstacles for the practice of Cakrasamvara. They are invoked to support the practices of these sadhanas and gain realization of Mahamudra.

14.1 Yamantaka

Yamantaka presides over the eastern direction and is one of the popular deities of the Nepalese Buddhist Pantheon. It is said

that he is the emanation of Bodhisattva Manjushree. With great awesome and virtuous strength, he is capable of subduing poisonous serpents and eliminating countless obstacles.

Bodhisattva Manjushree took this wrathful form in order to subdue the Lord of death. So Yamantaka symbolizes the victory of wisdom over death, evil and suffering. How Yamantaka subdued Yama, Lord of death is described in a le;end. It is said that a Bonpo ascetic was just attaining the final stage of his meditative experience after a long years of samadhi. In the mean time a gang of robbers entered his cave in order to slaughter a bull they had stolen. Having cut off the bull's head they happened to see him and immediately began to attack him. This ascetic begged for mercy but they did not hear his request. They severed his head. All of sudden this severed head took the form of Yama and fitted the bull's head on to the place of his own lost head and then massacred the robbers and drank their blood from cups made of their skulls. Out of the great rage he even threatened to destroy the whole of Tibet. Then the Tibetans prayed to their protector Manjushree, who then transformed himself into a wrathful appearance of Yamantaka in order to conquer Yama. In the ferocious battle that followed, Yama was subdued. He later determined to become a protector of dharma (thus the name Dharmaraja for Yama).

Among the many forms of Yamantaka, Yamantaka Vajrabhairava is the most popular. He is described in the meditational texts as follows:

Yamantaka Vajrabhairava has eight heads. The principle head is that of a bull or a buffalo. He has 34 arms and 16 feet to subdue Yama from escaping. On the top of the eight heads lies the gentle face of golden coloured image of Manjushree. His two principal hands hold a skull bowl and a vajra chopper (skt. ***kartri***). The legs are clustered together. His erect phallus has bright red tip. He wears a garland of severed heads, a crown of five skulls symbolizing he has the wisdom of five Buddhas. Beneath the feet lie the subjugated deities and animals. He is usually depicted with his Prajna.

Yamantaka ›





‹ *Vighnantaka*



Acala ›

14.2 Vighnantaka

Vighnantaka presides over the northern direction and is one of the most popular wrathful deities in the Nepalese pantheon. He has different forms too. In his two arm form he stands in the Pratyalidha attitude, one face being blue in colour. He carries the Tarjanipasa in his left hand and vajra in his right hand. His appearance is ferocious, his brown hair rises straight upwards.

In his six arm form he carries a Kartri and a kapala with his two principal hands and a Damaru and a goad in his right hands with a noose and a trident in the left hand. He is green in colour. He has three faces showing green, white and red colour. His two principal hands hold his prajna as usual. In some figures lord Vighnantaka is seen trampling heavily on Ganesa, Lord of obstacles. How Lord Vighnantaka subdued Ganesh is narrated in Swayambhu legend as follows.

Once Odiyana Acarya, a great Pandita, after receiving his eight great power (skt. ***astasiddhi***) came to Kachchapal mountain near Chovar in order to meditate. He sat on the hide of an elephant and invoked all the deities (33 crores) with the exception of Ganesh, who resides in the nearby mountain. Ganesh was surprised to see a multitude of divinities gathering there near his residence. On investigation he found that. Odiyana Acarya was practicing austerities inviting all the deities. On knowing this he was furious and ordered his retinue consisting of Putans, Kataputans, asuras, aquatic animals and others to create obstacles in his austerities. The attack of Ganesh's

retinue was quite effective. Odiyana Acarya felt quite helpless and hence invoked Lord Vighnantaka, the great destroyer of obstacles. Lord Vighnantaka instantly appeared in his terrific six-armed form and vanquished the army of Ganesh and his retinue. After subduing Ganesh he instructed Odiyana Acarya that, he should perform the offering first to Ganesh the king of obstacles, in order to be successful in any effort. Thus Nepalese people started offering to Ganesh in the first place before observing any auspicious occasions, any social or religious rituals or business enterprise, in order to ensure success.

14.3 Acala

Acala is one of the wrathful deities of the direction in the north-east corner. He is blue in colour and has three faces blue, white and red. He holds a vajra and a jewel and a lotus. His two principal hands hold his Prajna in embrace. In the Nepalese Vajrayana Buddhist tradition an initiation of Acala alias Candamaharosana is essential for becoming a Buddhist priest. In Sadhanamala he is described as having one face, two arms and is squint-eyed. He looks ferocious with fangs. He wears a jewelled crown and a garland of severed heads. He carries a sword in his right hand and a noose in the left. His sacred thread is of white snake. He is clad in tiger skin and bears an effigy of Akshobhya on his crown. This Protector deity is always depicted in father-mother aspect and is never to be displayed in public.

A special tantra dedicated to Acala can be found in original sanskrit text. His sadhana is to be performed always in secret and is to be practised only by those who are initiated.

It is said that through his sadhana and worship, Acala will help the practitioner to eliminate disaster of drought, flood and to subdue thieves and enemies.

14.4 Mahabala

This deity Mahabala has three faces of blue, white and red colours, six arms and resides in the north-west corner. He holds a



trident, a sword, a jewel and a lotus. He holds his Prajna with his two principal hands as usual.

According to Sadhanamala, he is one faced, four armed and red in colour. He looks ferocious and his brown hair rises straight upwards and is tied by a snake. He carries in his right hands, a white staff and a chowrie while the two left hands display the namaskar mudra and a raised index finger. He is clad in tiger skin, wears ornaments of snakes and stands in the Pratyalidha attitude. He bears the effigy of Amitabha on the crown.



Prajnantaka

The images of Mahabala are rare in Nepal, India and Tibet but they are found in Chinese collections. However miniature paintings of this deity are found here and there in Nepalese Buddhist monasteries. These deities are worshipped in the group of ten during initiation ceremony of Cakrasamvara.

14.5 Prajnantaka

The Protector Prajnantaka presides over the southern direction. He is white in colour. He has three faces of white, blue and red colour. He has four arms. He holds a white staff with vajra mark, a sword, a jewel and a lotus. His two principal hands embrace his prajna.

Buddhist Vajracharyas during an initiation rite have these images of ten deities painted on a wooden planks. The stone and bronze images are very rare and are available only in China.

14.6 Padmantaka

The Protector Padmaritaka presides over the western direction. He is red in colour. His three faces are of red, blue and white colours. He holds a red lotus, a sword, a jewel and a discus. His two principal hands hold his Prajna in embrace.

His images are very rare here in Nepal. But they can however be found in miniature paintings only.

Padmanantaka ›





Takkiraja
‹ *or*
Vajrayaksha

An image of
Vajrayaksha can
be found in the
collection of
Dai ka kuji Temple,
Kyoto, Japan.
(75.2cm)

14.7 Takkiraja or Vajrayaksha

The Protector Takkiraja is the guardian deity in the south-east corner. He is blue in colour, his three faces are blue, white and red in colour. He holds a blue staff, a sword, a jewel and a lotus.

The name of Protector Takkiraja is mentioned in several strotras or hymns such as Mangalastava which is frequently recited by Nepalese Buddhists. In this stava the devotees make great petition to these deities to remove obstacles in the ten directions and aspire for peace and happiness. In Vajrahumkara mandala he is Vajrayaksha. He has six arms. His two principal hands hold a pestle, an arrow and a sword. His left three hands hold a bell, a bow and a wheel.

As a legend goes, if one practices the sadhana of Vajrayaksha or Takkiraja then it eliminates disasters, subdues demons and ghosts. In Japanese Buddhist circles, it is believed that if one recites his mantra for seven times before eating, the eater can escape the danger of food poisoning.

14.8 Niladanda

The Protector Niladanda presides over the south-west corner. He has three faces showing blue, white and red colour. He has six arms. He holds a blue staff, a sword, a jewel and a lotus. His two principal hands hold prajna in embrace. As stated earlier his name is also mentioned in several stavas or hymns which are often recited by Nepalese Buddhists. The images of Niladanda are very rare in Nepal and are mainly found in China.

‹ *Niladanda*





Usnisa ›

14.9 Usnisa

The protector Usnisa presides over the upper direction i.e. the zenith. He is also known as Usnisacakravarti. He is yellow in colour. His three faces show yellow, blue and red colours. He holds a yellow discus, a sword, a jewel and a lotus. His two principal hands hold his prajna. His images are extremely rare in Nepal and are found only in China.

14.10 Sumbharaja

The Projector Sumbharaja presides over the nether world. He is blue in colour. His three faces are blue, white and red in colour. He holds a vajra, a sword, a jewel and a lotus. His two principal hands embrace his prajna. He is wrathful in appearance. His images are also extremely rare in Nepal.

Sumbharaja ›





Dhritarastra

XV. Four Great Kings (Caturmaharajas)

15.1 Dhritarastra

Dhritarastra is one of the four Great kings in the first heaven of this desire realm. He serves as the guardian in the East. He protects the land and living beings so he is called Heavenly Lord of maintaining the country (skt. *Dhritarastra*).

He is the lord of Gandharvas. He has 91 sons ready to protect the disciples of Lord Buddha. According to the Mahasanghata Sutra, Buddha Shakyamuni told Dhritarastra to protect the Buddha dharma in the four continents of Jambudvipa with utmost care. Following his instruction Dhritarastra promised to lead all retinues of Buddhist disciples to the east of Jambudvipa so that the true dharma might be diffused in the world forever. He lives in the city of Superior sage, magnificent and situated in the east of Sumeru mountain.

According to the Dharani Sutra, this king wears various kinds of celestial robes. He holds a vina with both his hands. Nepalese Buddhists generally know him by the name of Vinaraj and his image is seen in the east corner of the roof. He is depicted as white.



‹ *Virudhak*



Virpaksha ›

15.2 Virudhak

Virudhak is yet another great king of the southern direction. He resides in the middle of Sumeru mountain. He rules over a city called Sudarsana located to the south of Sumeru Mountain. The city is extremely beautiful and occupies an area of 6,000 square yojanas. Virudhaka leads an assembly of Kumbhandas to serve as the guardian of the Buddha dharma in the southern direction.

In the past Buddha Shakyamuni instructed Virudhaka that he should protect and guard the Buddha dharma in this Jambudvipa where 1,000 buddhas come to bless the sentient beings. In reply to that the great king of Kumbhandas promised to protect and guard the Jambudvipa in the southern direction.

His body is red in colour. He shows a wrathful appearance. His right hand holds a sword. His left hand rests on his knee. In Nepalese tradition he is called Khadgaraja and can be seen in the corner of the roof of the temple and also in the entrance of the monasteries.

15.3 Virupaksha

Virupaksha is one of the four great kings who rules the first heaven of desire realm in the west. He is the lord of Nagas. He serves as the guardian of this Jambudvipa of the western direction.

His body is red in colour. He shows a wrathful appearance. His right hand holds a spear of three points, his left fist rests on his knee. He can be recognized through the Caitya symbol in his left hand.

Virupaksha lives in the city of Sudarsana on the west of Sumeru mountain. His city is as beautiful as that of the three other kings. He leads immeasurable serpent deities i.e. nagas to protect Buddha dharma in the west.



Vaisravana

Virupaksha leads besides the retinue of nagas, innumerable spirits of sun and moon and others. They are all responsible for the protection of the Buddha dharma. Devotees worship these four maharajas in a group.

15.4 Vaisravana

He is also one of the four great kings who rules the first heaven of the desire realm in the north. He is the lord of Yakshas. Some regard him as also the lord of wealth who gives blessings for prosperity. He rules over the city north of Sumeru mountain, supremely beautiful, adorned with precious jewels. It is said that his city is as beautiful as Sukhavati heaven in the west. He has five princes and has 28 messengers under his command. They are his retinue.

Like the three other kings, he was also instructed by Buddha Shakyamuni to protect the Buddha dharma in Jambudvipa in the northern direction.

In Nepalese Buddhist tradition Vaisravana or kubera is worshipped singly and is very popular. Newar Buddhists women make the image of Vaishravan out of rice flour during Yomari-Punhi festival (December–January). It is also customary to keep an image of Vaishravan in the treasury room or inside the treasure box.

The worshipping of four guardian deities was introduced in China by Pandit Amogh Vajra during the eight century.

XVI. Eight Dikpalas (Eight Deities of Direction)

16.1 Indra or Sakra

Indra is the king of devas in the heaven of Trayatrimsa or third heaven of the desire realm. He rides on the Airavata elephant and is yellow in colour. He holds in his two hands a vajra and a breast of a woman. He is sometimes seated on the Airavata elephant wearing a headdress. Sometimes with his right hand he holds a Vajra and his left hand rests on a hip. Sakra is a very popular deva in both Hindu and Buddhist tradition.



Indra

In the past when Indra was a human being he had thirty-three pious friends. Under his leadership they cultivated many virtues by helping the poor, establishing many wells for thirsty people and houses for travellers. By these virtues he attained the state of Indra, the king of devas in the city of Sudarsana ruling over 32 palaces. The other 32 friends became the governors of these 32 palaces.

Trayatrimsa heaven is a very lovely palace with natural beauty. The city is full of lovely damsels called Apsaras. The only suffering that the citizens of this heaven have is to undergo to fight with Asuras at times. Hence after losing their lives or at the end of their life span there arises the five signs or omens which predict their end of life in that heaven. The story of Sakra fighting against Asuras is a very popular literature in Buddhist and Hindu tradition.

Sakra is said to be a guardian of Buddhism. He always requested Buddha Shakyamuni for dharma teachings for the benefit of all sentient beings. He is better treated in Buddhist literature in contrast to Hindu tradition. He usually made a huge offering to Buddhist Sangha.

Once upon a time, one of the friends of Indra went to Avici Hell and suffered a lot. Through repeated requests of Indra, Buddha Shakyamuni delivered the Tantra of Durgati-hari sodhana. When Indra himself was about to die, Buddha Shakyamuni delivered and transmitted the dharma door of Aparimita dharani by which the life span of Sakra was extended significantly.

16.2 Yama

Yama or Yamaraja is another popular deva sometimes called the King of the Death. He rides on a buffalo. His right hand holds a banner of a human head, and his left hand holds a Tarjani pasa.

Yama is also responsible for ruling over all the Preta realms. The Sanskrit word '*yama*' stands also for twin rulers. It means that the king of the death governs hells as well as ghost realms together with his sister. He himself rules over dead males and his sister being responsible for talking care of dead females. King Yama lives in palace surrounded by cakravala i.e. an iron chained mountain in the south of Jambudvipa. As he rules over the hells he does not enjoy the fruits of his meritorious karma. Because in his past lives, he created evil karmic forces and he had to endure the effects of past karma during three periods of time. When he was in suffering, his palace naturally changed into an iron city of burning flame.

According to the version of some legend, it is said that he was originally a king of Vaisali. At one time he happened to be engaged in a bloody war. He wished he were the master of hell and was accordingly reborn as Yama in hell, together with his generals and army.

According to the Tibetan legends, however, the king Yama was subdued by Yamantaka, a wrathful manifestation of Manjushree Bodhisattva.



‹ *Yama*



Kuvera ›

16.3 Kuvera

Kuvera is one of the most popular deities of Nepalese Buddhists because of his bestower of wealth character. He is generally represented as the lord of wealth and guardian of the northern direction. He is deep yellow in colour and holds in his two hands a goad and a gada (mace). Sometimes he is represented sitting on a lion with a green mane, holding a banner of victory in the right hand and carrying the mongoose who vomits a wish fulfilling gem.

Kuvera's abode is said to be Alaka in the Himalayas, enriched with wealth and abundance. He is always surrounded with yaksha generals and Kinnars. He may have sometimes a third eye also. In the Durgatiparisodhana Tantra, it is stated, Kubera the great king of the Yakshas, bowed before the Lord Shakyamuni Buddha and said: O Lord, I together with eighty eight great war generals of the Yakshas, will persevere in removing every fear of that great being who holds this tantra. I will give wealth and grain in abundance. I will protect his country and provinces, his people, servants, relatives, friends, sons, daughters wives and the rest. I will take care of his oxen, cows, asses, camels, sheep, elephants, goats and the rest.

He is thus especially invoked for generating wealth and prosperity. There are many legends relating to his role as guardian of all the treasures of the earth and the treasures belonging to the people. Kuvera is worshipped both by the Hindus and Buddhists alike.

16.4 Varuna Deva

Varuna Deva is also one of the powerful deities representing the lord of water element. He is generally presented as white in colour. He sits on a Makara. He has the colour of lotus. He holds the invincible noose and a conch in his hands. He is adorned with the serpent's hood over his head.

In Nepalese Buddhist tradition, in the Guru mandala rite the offerings are also made to Varuna deva in the group of eight. i.e. the deities of eight Directions.

It is said in the Guna Karanda Vyuha Sutra, that Varuna emerged from the knees of Arya Avalokiteshvara and instructed that he should protect the sentient beings by bestowing Amrita or nectar or pure water. Being the lord of the underworld, lord of Nagas, he should bestow riches of the underworld to the people and protect the dharma. Avalokiteshvara instiucted, 'If you perform Bodhicarya as I mention, you will definitely acquire tremendous merits and will attain Buddhahood in the future'. In reply Varuna Deva promised to act accordingly.

16.5 Agni Deva

Agni Deva is also one of the most powerful devas representing the element of fire presiding in the south-east corner. He is red in colour and has great radiance. He is seated on a chariot drawn by seven horses. He has seven tongues and three eyes. He holds a ladle and a Kamandalu in his two hands.



‹ *Varuna*



Agni Deva ›

In the Nepalese Buddhist tradition, in the Guru mandala rite, offering is also made to this Agni Deva along with other deities.

He is especially worshipped and revered in the fire offering or home Yajna performance.

The Guna Karandavyuha sutra relates that Agni Deva is originated from the navel of Arya Avalokiteshvara. Arya Avalokiteshvara instructed Agni Deva to purify the phenomenal world by the fire offered to him. Accordingly Agni Deva promised then to abide by the instruction.

16.6 Vayu Deva

Vayu Deva is also one of the powerful deities representing the air element. He is generally represented as blue in colour. He resides in the north-west corner. He is riding on a chariot drawn by deer. He carries a flag banner in his hands. He is full of motion. He has the colour of smoke. He is the sustenance for the people.

He is worshipped as is the custom in a group of eight deities of direction in the Guru mandala rite.

The Guna Karandavyuha sutra further states that Vayu deva is originated from the mouth of Arya Avalokiteshvara. Arya Avalokiteshvara instructed Vayu Deva to protect the sentient beings by being vital prana (vayu) and give blessings and inspire the beings to perform meritorious deeds. He was told that if he performed the deeds as mentioned, he would then

certainly attain Buddhahood in future. Vayu deva solemnly accepted the blessings with great devotion.

In Durgatiparisodhana Tantra, the Lord of the wind said "O Lord, I will never cause that great being to be terrified by winds. I will not produce untimely winds. I will provide grains, flowers and fruits and remove all fears."



Vayu Deva

16.7 Isana Deva

Isana Deva (or Mahadeva) is also one of the eight deities of the directions. The word Isana represents the north-east corner. He resides in the north-east direction. He is seated on a chariot drawn by bulls. He is white in colour and holds in his two hands a trident and a kapala. A half moon appears on his matted hair. He is adorned with a sacred thread of a serpent and his body is besmeared with ashes. His throat appears blue. He is naked and has three eyes.

In the Durgatiparisodhana Tantra, the Lord of the all the spirits bowed before the Lord Buddha and said,

> "O Lord with regard to that king, prince warrior or brahman, I will guarantee refuge here and beyond, provide protection, tranquility and happiness, immunity to the sword and punishment counteracting and destroying poison, stability of borders, regions and estates. I will provide them with a Vajra enclosure made of Vajra darts, and a Vajra Canopy. I will assist them in needs and give an indication of what is to be done and what not. I will explain through a dream that is auspicious and inauspicious. I will help for every success with no obstruction to the performers of rites."

As usual he is also worshipped in the Guru mandala rite of Nepalese Buddhist tradition, in a group of eight deities of directions.



Isana Deva

16.8 Nairrati Deva

He is also one of the eight deities of the directions. He resides in the south-west corner. He is the lord of the goblins or rakshasa called Nairrati. He is blue in colour and rides on a corpse. His two hands hold a sword and a khetaka or Kapala filled with meat. He has a wrathful face with exposed teeth.

In the Durgatiparisodhana Tantra, in the chapter of Mandala of Dikpalas, Nairrati, the great lord of the Rakshasas, said this: "O Lord, with regard to the king, prince brahmana, warrior or any other person who hold this tantra, I will not cause diseases, fear of Pretas and Pisacas, fear of Rakshas and others or fear of untimely death. I will always provide them with security, protection and cover."

As usual he is worshipped in the Guru mandala rite of Nepalese Buddhism, in a group of eight deities of directions.

Nairrati Deva ›



XVII. Guardian Deities

17.1 Mahakala

Mahakala is a deity worshipped both by Hindu and Buddhists. He can be seen in the entrance of every Buddhist monastery of Kathmandu valley. He is said to be the protector of doctrine of Buddha Shakyamuni. There are many forms of Mahakala, among them two-armed, four-armed, six-armed and sixteen-armed being the most popular one.

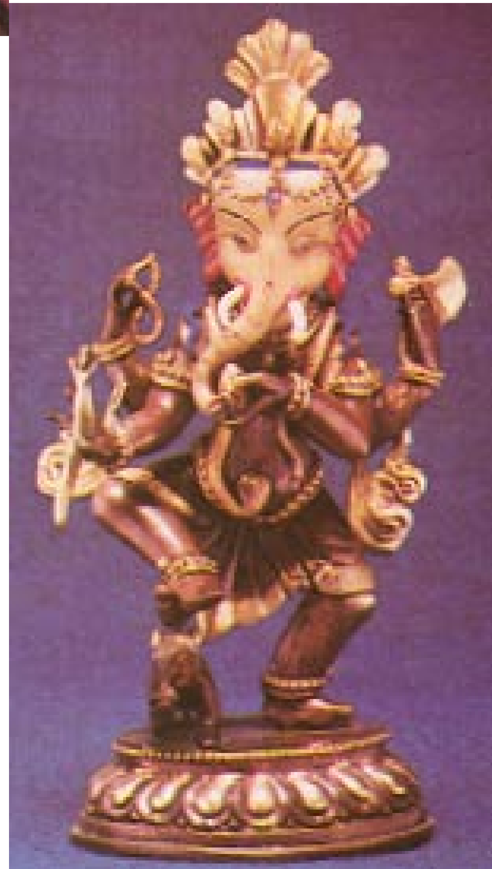
In the Nepalese Buddhist tradition the two-armed form of Mahakala carved in stone is found in large numbers. This two-armed form is described as follows:

> His body is dark blue in colour. He looks wrathful bedecked with ornaments of serpents. He wears a garland of severed heads and a crown of five skulls symbolizing the five defilements. His right hand holds Kartri symbolizing that it can cut ego-clinging and attachment, and his left hand holds a kapala filled with blood symbolizing the subjugation of evil ones. He wears tiger skin symbolizing the purification of desire. He has three eyes symbolizing his clear comprehension of Three times. He looks ferocious against the blazing fire. His mouth is smeared with blood signifying that he is active in eliminating evils.



Mahakala (stone) ‹ (Swayambhu Museum)

Ganesh (bronze) ›



The characteristic feature of the Protector Mahakala is that he, during war, can protect those relying on him since there is limitless number of retinue of spirits and ghosts under his command who are skillful in battle. He can provide sufficient foods to the needy. Separate temples with Mahakala alone can be found in large number.

It is said that Mahakala is the manifestation of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. From the heart of Arya Avalokiteshvara emerged a dark blue *Hung* letter, which transformed into the Instantaneous Protector of wisdom. Buddha Amitabha proclaimed thus, "Son of the family, you shall have the strength of the wrathful Yama, Lord of death. You shall have the mountain spirits, the yakshas, the devils and the demonesses as your messengers. You shall embody the great wrathful empowerments of body, speech, mind, qualities and activities of all the Buddhas throughout the three times". Ever since Mahakala has remained as the doctrine Protector of all the Buddha fields.

17.2 Ganesh/Ganapati

Ganesh is one of the most popular guardian deities worshipped in Nepal by Hindus and Buddhists alike. Large numbers of independent temples of Ganesh are found in Kathmandu valley. Ganesh is said to be the deity of eliminator of obstacles. To begin any auspicious work or enterprise Nepalese people adore this deity with the hope that they may accomplish their

work successfully by averting the obstacles if there be any. The form of Ganesh or Ganapati is described in Sadhanamala and Nispannayogavali.

Ganapati rides on a mouse and is white in colour. He has an elephant face. A snake forms his sacred thread. He is four-armed. In the two right hands he carries a trisula and a laddu i.e. sweet ball and in the two left hands a parasu i.e. axe and a radish.

Ganesh is said to be the son of Shiva and Parvati. It so happened once that Kumara or Kartikeyya challenged Ganesh to circumambulate the world. The winner's prize was to be to be worshipped by the people first. Kartikeyya travelled the world with his vehicle peacock several times and was about to report this to Lord Shiva and Parvati. Ganesh then thinking that he would not be able to circumambulate the world with his tiny vehicle mouse came out with different idea. He began to circumambulate around Lord Shiva and Parvati thrice.

Lord Shiva and Parvati asked the reason for that. Ganesh replied that this triple world was not greater than his parents and circumambulating them, it is thus far more better than circumambulating the triple world. On hearing the wise answer of his son Ganesh, Lord Shiva and Parvati blessed Ganesh that he should be the first deity to be worshipped before any ritual ceremony or auspicious occasion.



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Glossary of Sanskrit Words

Abhayamudra —

gesture of fearlessness, protection shown usually by the left hand palm turned outward and all the fingers extended upwards. **See** ***Buddha Amoghasiddhi***

Abhirati —

One of the important Pure Lands in Buddhist cosmology. It is the abode of Buddha Akshobhya. It is described in Vimalakirti Nirdesh Sutra.

Abhisamayalamkara —

One of the five major works of Bodhisattva Maitreyanatha, Guru of Arya Asanga dealing with the doctrine of Prajnaparamita.

Acala —

A wrathful deity who protects beings from disasters and untimely accidents. **See** ten wrathful deities of direction.

Adarsajnana —

Mirror-like Wisdom of Buddha Akshobhya — Knowledge that understands and experiences that all phenomena are illusions like reflections in a mirror. The phenomena appears yet it is empty.

Adi-Buddha —

Primordial Awareness or original wakefulness or Buddhanature immanent in all sentient beings.

Adi-svara —

Primordial Lord, a place near Swayambhu Hill

Airavat —

Six tusked elephant, vehicle of Indra, the king of devas

Akanistha Bhuvan —

Highest heaven in the Form realm, abode of Buddha Vairocana

Akshamala —

A string of beads — a rosary-made of Rudraksha or crystals

Alaka —
Abode of Kuvera, the deity of wealth

Amoghpasa —
A noose which binds the desired object infallibly. **See** Amoghpasa Lokesvara

Amrit Kalasa —
a water vase used for invoking deities, for vase empowerment and other tantric rituals.

Ankusha —
an elephant goad-symbolized for awareness which controls elephant like untamed mind.

Apsara —
Celestial maidens

Ardhaparyanka —
particular form of sitting posture. In this pose both the legs are on the same pedestal, in which one of the knees is raised.

Asura —
mortal enemies of devas

Asamkheya —
an infinitely large number

Avici —
name of hot hell where sufferings are uninterrupted. Sinners who commit five deadly sins experience suffering in this hell, for long periods of time unceasingly.

Bhadrakalpa —
Fortunate aeon — in this aeon 1,000 Buddhas would appear in this world system among which Shakyamuni Buddha is the fourth.

Bhairava —
A wrathful deity, form of Shiva

***Bhumisparsamudra* —**

A gesture of Earth touching associated with Buddha Shakyamuni who, when challenged by Mara, invoked the Earth goddess to bear witness to his right to the seat. In other words it is the gesture of certification of the Buddha's enlightenment. **See** Buddha Akshobhya.

***Bodhicitta* —**

A desire for Perfect Enlightnment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

***Bodhimanda* —**

A seat where enlightenment is attained.

***Bodhisattva* —**

A being who aspires for Perfect Enlightenment for the sake of sentient beings.

***Bodhyangamudra* —**

A hand gesture primarily associated with Buddha Shakyamuni's first preaching of the Dharma. It is also called Dharmacakrapravartana mudra. In this mudra, two hands are held near the chest, the right palm, outward, with thumb and index finger joined and left palm inward.

***Bodhicarya* —**

Practice of a Bodhisattva, usually six perfections and four means of gathering disciples.

***Brahma* —**

A deity in form realm

***Buddhapratima* —**

An image of the Buddha in sculptures or paintings.

***Caitya* —**

A Stupa: A symbol or representative of Mind Aspect of the Buddha's body, speech and mind.

***Cakra* —**

A Wheel, symbol of Buddha's turning of Wheel of dharma.

Camara —
Chowris or the fly whisk made out of the tail of a yak.

Cakrawala —
An iron ring of mountain surrounding the deepest hells.

Cakravartin —
An Universal emperor who rules the earth righteously.

Candrahasa —
A sword hold by Bodhisattva Manjusree who cut Covar gorge of Kathmandu with this divine sword.

Catuskoti —
Four Point Analysis of Nagarjuna. According to Nagarjuna a thing cannot be produced: by themselves, by others, or by both or without cause.

Cintamani —
Wish-fulfilling jewel

Damaru —
Small drum, used in Tantric rituals and ceremonies.

Danda —
Staff or mace.

Dhanu —
bow, representing sincere devotion or faith which is steadfast without which an arrow of Mind cannot be projected towards the goal.

Dhanyamanjary —
rice stalks, a symbol of abundance of rice grains or wealth.

Dharmacakramudra —
See *Bodhyangamudra*.

Dharma Dharmatavibhaga —
One of the five works of Maitreyanath dealing with conventional and ultimate truths.

Dharmakaya —

Buddha's body of truth, experienced during meditation devoid of thought constructs.

Dharmadhatu jnana —

Knowledge that understands all phenomena are devoid of inherent existence and hence empty in essence.

Dharmalaksana —

A sect of Mahayana tradition prevalent in Japan.

Dharani —

A conglomeration of mystic syllables long or short usually recited for protection from disease, lengthening the life span or protection from untimely death etc.

Dhyanamudra —

a gesture of hands, usually right hand placed on the left hand with two thumb fingers joined forming a loop. **See** Amitabha Buddha.

Garuda —

a mythical bird with his body as a human. He has large pointed beak and two huge wings. Garuda is represented as symbol of wisdom which can detect serpent-like delusion from a distance.

Gandharva —

a celestial being in Caturmaharaja heaven. For these celestial beings food is the incense or fragrance of the foods. Our offering of incense is generally consumed by these Gandharvas.

Guru Mandala —

a treatise by Pandit Advayavajra, a ritual manual of Nepalese Vajracharya priests.

Gunla —

a Newari month of religious festival (July–August) when Nepalese Buddhists observe and perform various meritorious acts.

Jatamattrochcha —

Mountain Peak behind Balaju Garden from where Buddha Vipasyin threw a lotus seed which grew up into a thousand petalled lotus in which a self-born divine flame Swayambhu emerged.

Jetavana —

a grove where Lord Buddha spent 25 rainy retreats in his life time. It is situated at Shravasti near Balrampur District of Uttarapradesh, India.

Jneyavarana —

obstructions to Omniscience or Perfect Buddhahood. Thirty different types of Jneyavarana are described in Madhyanta vibhaga Sastra of Maitreyanath.

Kalpa vraksa —

a wish-fulfilling tree found in celestial realms.

Kalyanamitra —

A spritual friend or Guru who guides us to Perfect Enlightenment.

Kalasa — See *Amrita Kalasa*

Kapala —

A skull usually filled with blood symbolizing ignorant sentient beings.

Kartri —

a curved knife symbolizing wisdom which destroys the ignorance of sentient beings.

Kamandalu —

A water vase used by ancient rishis or sages to keep sacred water collected from the Ganges.

Kavaca —

A shield

Kamadhenu —

A celestial cow which grants whatever one desires.

Khatvanga —

the staff is generally surmounted by vajra or skulls. Favourite emblem

held by Padma Sambhava. Sometimes his consorts are also represented by this emblem.

Kinnara —
A celestial being in Caturmaharaja heaven. He has a human body with a horse head.

Klesavarana —
Obstructions to liberation. In the Theravada tradition 10 factors are described which bind one to Samsara.

Kumbhanda —
A celestial nightmare ghost who resides in the heaven of Caturmaharaja.

Lalitasana —
Sitting posture of ease, in which one leg hangs down the seat while the other rests horizontally on the seat.

Makara —
A crocodile

Namaskarmudra —
A gesture of obeisance with two hands folded at the chest.

Parasu —
a battle axe

Padma —
a lotus

Pindapatra —
an alms bowl usually held by Buddha and his disciples symbolizing his detachment from worldly affairs.

Pisaca —
a malignant hungry ghost who harms human beings.

Pinda —
a ball of rice cakes usually offered to deceased relatives

Phala —
a fruit

Phanikeshara vitaraga —
a shrine near Pharping

Prajna —
insight knowledge that understands the nature of phenomena as it is.

Prana —
vital air which sustains our life.

Preta —
a being in the lower realm where one suffers from hunger and thirst for long years.

Pundarika —
a lotus

Pustakapothy —
a scripture

Rakshasa —
a demon

Ratna —
a jewel

Sambhogakaya —
a subtle form body of the Buddha having 32 major and 80 minor marks.

Santikaranamudra —
a gesture of pacification.

Sankha —
a conch, symbol of pure speech

Samyeka Festival —
a Buddhist festival of Patan and Kathmandu which is observed every four years in Patan and 12 years in Kathmandu, where images of the Buddha Dipamkara are displayed and worshipped.

Samatajnana —
Wisdom of Equality of Ratna Sambhava Buddha. When one acquires this wisdom he will perceive the person and the phenomena as devoid of inherent existence.

Sarvastivada —
a sect of Hinayana Buddhism which flourished during the 1st century of the Christian era.

Sunyata Sapati —
a Madhyamika treatise of Nagarjuna.

Swasti —
auspiciousness

Svetamegha —
a white cloud

Tandava —
a wrathful body posture of Siva.

Tarjanipasa —
a noose round the raised index finger.

Tarpanamudra —
a gesture of paying homage to deceased fathers. Any arm showing this gesture is bent and is raised upward in a line with the shoulder. The palm of the hand is turned inward with fingers slightly bent and pointed towards the shoulder. See Namasangiti.

Tirtha —
a holy place near the confluence of two or three rivers.

Tusita —
a celestial realm from where Buddha Shakyamuni descended to perform the actions of the Buddha.

Trayatrimsa —
third heaven in the desire realm where Indra, the king of Devas resides.

Udambara —
a rare tree

Upaya —
skill in means

Upasaka —
a lay devotee of the Buddha who observes five precepts.

Utpala —
: a blue lotus

Uttaratantra Sastra —
: one of the five works of Maitreyanatha dealing with Buddha-nature.

Urna or ***Urnakosa*** —
: a coiling of hair between two eyebrows of the Buddha which emits lights before the delivery of a Mahayana sutra.

Ushnisa —
: Buddha's crown

Vajra —
: a tantric ritual object symbolizing the unity of wisdom and skill in means.

Vahana —
: a vehicle

Varadamudra —
: a gesture of giving

Vitarkamudra —
: a gesture of debate with the right hand raised up with the thumb and index finger touching each other, stretched.

Vigrahavyavartani —
: a treatise of logic by Nagarjuna.

Yaksha —
: celestial being in the retinue of Kuvera, the god of wealth

Yojana —
: a distance of eight Kilometers

Yogacara —
: a system of Buddhist philosophy propounded by Asanga and Vasubandhu

Yomaripunhi —
: a Newar festival in which Newar women make sweets out of rice cake in the form of hemisphere with one end pointed.

